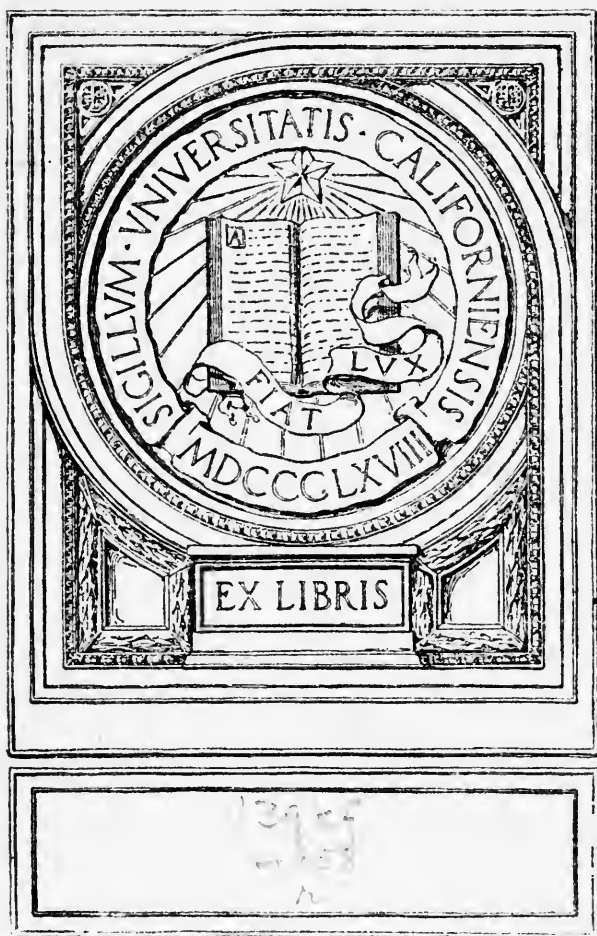


REAL RUSSIANS

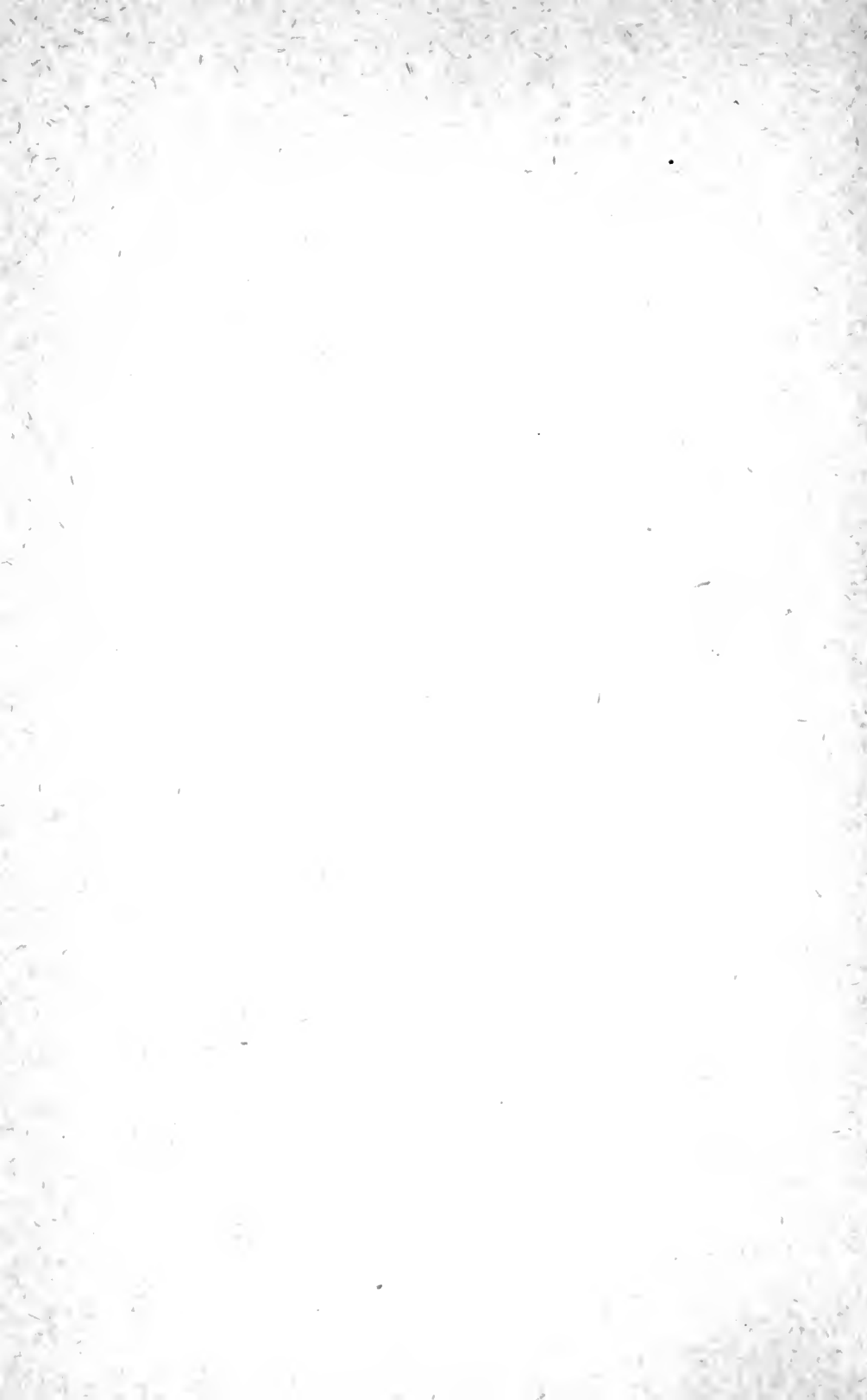
BY
SONIA E. HOWE



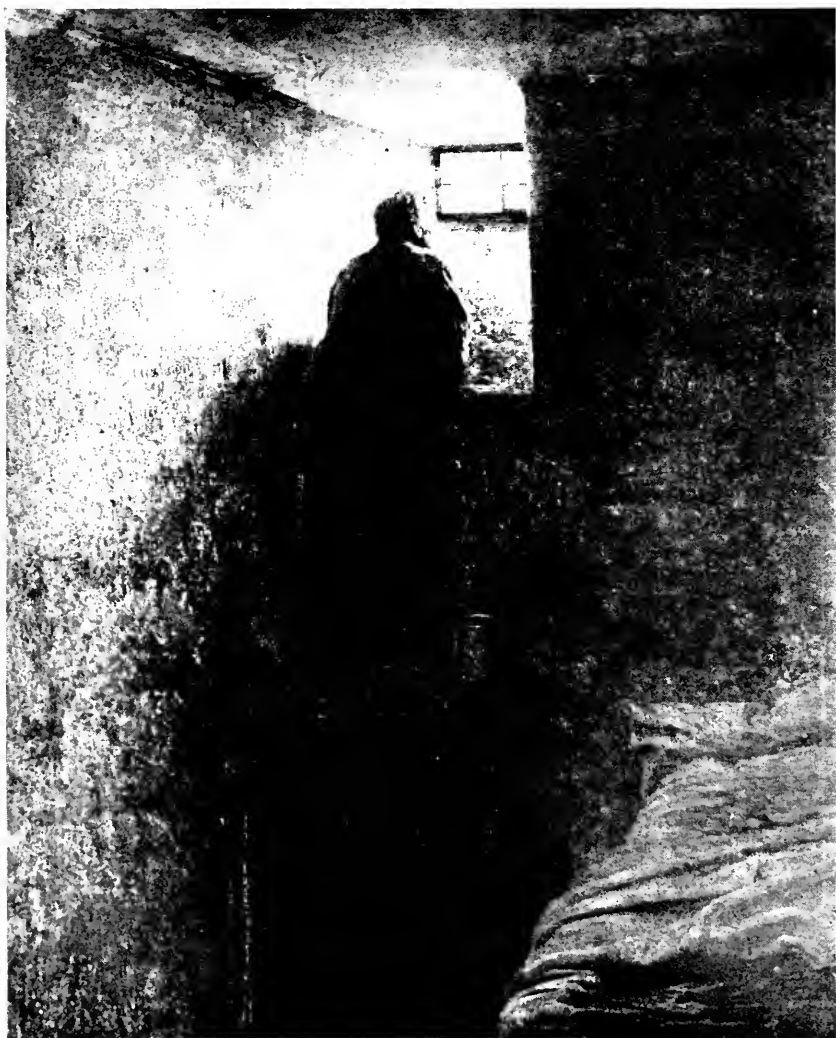
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REAL RUSSIANS



THE POLITICAL PRISONER.



THE POLITICAL PRISONER.

[By Yaroshenko.

REAL RUSSIANS

By
SONIA E. HOWE

Author of "A Thousand Years of Russian History,"
"Some Russian Heroes, Saints and Sinners,"
"The False Dmitri."

ILLUSTRATED

PHILADELPHIA :

J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY

LONDON AND EDINBURGH :

SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON & CO., LTD.

1918.

TO THE
ADMINISTRATOR

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DEDICATION.

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK
TO ALL
RUSSIAN POLITICAL EXILES,
NOW HAPPILY FREE.

385118

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NICHOLSON), AMBASSADOR IN PETROGRAD.

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FOREWORD.

I HAVE been requested to write a few words as an Introduction to the book which Mrs. Sonia Howe is presenting to the public. I gladly comply with the request, as I am sure that a perusal of the book will afford both pleasure and instruction to the reader. The main object of the journey of Mrs. Howe to Russia was to endeavour to obtain an amnesty for political exiles, and she also had an opportunity offered to her of befriending Russian prisoners of war who had escaped from German captivity. Her efforts in the above directions were satisfactorily successful, and she displayed both energy and tact in attaining her ends. The sketches which she gives of the persons with whom she came in contact, and of the various scenes and incidents which impressed her on her travels, are vivid and realistic, and are portrayed with considerable descriptive charm and force. I confidently recommend the book to the British public.

CARNOCK.

May 18th, 1917.

INTRODUCTION.

WHEN in May, 1916, Count Dmitry Olsoufieff, one of the delegates of the Imperial Council, then on a visit to London, invited me to come to Russia in order to plead privately with those in authority for a political amnesty, no one could have guessed that this act of justice would be performed—in less than a year—by an altogether new Government.

The amnesty for which I went to plead has come about in so wonderful and unexpected a way that, all lovers and friends of Russia can only praise God for the answer to their prayers. Surely no effort for righteousness, however insignificant, is in vain, and if my private mission resulted in nothing more than the liberation of but 120 administrative exiles,* and incidentally in bringing about a happier state for the soldiers who had escaped from German captivity, even so it was not useless, and I feel grateful to the generous-hearted man as whose guest I went to Russia. All honour to him !

*People sent into exile without trial, under suspicion of political offences or for holding views contrary to the régime in power.

Six months have passed since the events narrated in this book were written down as merely personal notes, without any idea of publication, as the record of actualities witnessed at a critical moment in the history of Russia.

Since the revolution has produced the tremendous changes which are now before the eyes of the world, I have been asked by a great many people whether last summer I had had any inkling of the coming Revolution? Yes! for the mutterings of the storm had begun to make themselves heard, and this makes me think that the story of my personal experiences on a journey rather unique for a woman, would prove of interest to the general reader, and might also enable him to realise that many of the disorders now become apparent were even then actually existing. This, I hope, will call forth even greater and more intelligent sympathy for the Russian people from their Allies. It is for this reason alone that publicity has been given to certain of the following chapters.

Now that the old order of things has passed away, I am at liberty to publish some of the interviews with Cabinet Ministers, and also the experiences with Russian soldiers who had escaped from captivity in Germany, as throwing interesting sidelights on men and matters political. I do so with the knowledge of Sir George Buchanan and with the approval of Count Olsoufieff.

If certain representatives of the old régime come out rather better than one generally expected of reactionaries—well, then let the Anglo-Saxon love of fair play come in, for is not one of its characteristics to give every man his due, even though he be opponent or enemy?

In addition to the personal notes, I wrote down at the request of friends my impressions of the people, and of prevailing conditions of everyday life, as of interest to a wider circle. Lying under a beautiful English chestnut tree, I therefore sent my thoughts back to Russia, and while I lived once again through things seen and heard in my native country, my pen transferred these conversations and experiences to paper. Thus the following chapters are not the production of a journalist, nor have they been written with an eye to effect, but are merely snapshots showing things as they are—without pre-arranged staging or artificial posing.

My only regret is that the style of narrative brings me so frequently on the scene.

ST. LUKE'S VICARAGE, FINCHLEY, N.

5th May, 1917.

REAL RUSSIANS.

CHAPTER I.

HOW IT CAME ABOUT THAT I WENT TO RUSSIA.

WE were talking about the Anglo-Russian Alliance, and I told Count Dmitry Olsoufieff, who had just arrived from Russia, that, when lecturing, I had often come across a strong feeling against this alliance on account of the continuance of the exile system.

"Does the question of political exile interest you?" the Count asked me with surprise.

"Very much so," I replied, and going up to my mantelpiece, I took down the model of an old Russian pilgrim, which I handed to him with the remark: "This little figure, made out of prison bread, was sent by a prisoner as a token of gratitude to those who were helping the political exiles. If only the Russian Government would proclaim an amnesty!" I exclaimed.

"That is my wish also," was his fervent retort, "and I have already spoken about it to various Ministers, but they say it could only be granted after some great victory."

As my guest was so evidently interested in the question, I told him of the small "Committee for the Relief of Administrative Exiles in Northern Russia and Siberia," of which I was Honorary Secretary, and that, thanks to the generosity of British lovers of Russia, we had been able to send out over £6,000 during the last ten years to assist some, at least, of the starving exiles.

Half an hour later, as we were driving along in a taxi, the Count suddenly turned to me: "Will you come with me to Petrograd, and speak to the Premier, Mr. Stuermer, just as you have spoken to me?" he said.

"Yes, I will," I replied without hesitation.

"Thank you," he said simply. "I will arrange for you to see all the Ministers, and if possible, the Empress Dowager."

On producing a letter of invitation from the Count, written specially for the Passport Bureau, a passport was at once promised to me:—

Claridge's Hotel,
Brook Street, W.

Le 13 Mai, 1916.

CHÈRE MRS. HOWE,

Sachant que vous êtes la fondatrice du Comité du secours des exilés administratifs en Sibérie et qui pendant dix ans à ce sujet vous étiez en relations avec le public anglais, je pense que votre voyage en Russie en ce moment pourrait être utile à la cause qui vous intéresse si profondément. Ainsi je me permets de vous inviter de venir à Petrograd, où je ferai mon possible pour vous donner l'occasion

de parler à notre premier ministre d'une façon intime. Veuillez agréer Madame, l'expression de mes sentiments distingués et croyez à ma profonde sympathie pour la cause à laquelle vous avez travaillé avec tant d'amour et tant d'énergie.

Votre dévoué,

COMTE DMITRY OLSOUFIEV.

(Membre du Conseil de l'Empire).

One of the officials on reading this letter, remarked to me with a smile : " You are going on a wonderful mission."

" I know it," I replied.

Before starting on my journey, at the suggestion of the Count, I sent the following letter to various representative Christian men, both lay and clerical, from most of whom I received sympathetic replies.

May 16th, 1916.

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL.

An unexpected opportunity has been offered me to plead personally and privately, the cause of the Political Exiles before the Prime Minister of Russia and Members of the Imperial Council. It has been suggested to me by one of the latter that it would be desirable for me to bring some letters from leading Christian people with regard to the effect an amnesty would have on public opinion in Great Britain. The idea is not to present the views of merely Party politicians, as these might prejudice the cause in the eyes of the Russian Ministers, to whom, however, the general view of Russia's genuine friends among the British nation would carry great weight.

May I ask you therefore for the great favour to write to me in a few words what your feelings are in this matter?

The amnesty depends on the will of the Tsar, on his Ministers and on the Imperial Council, and as I shall be granted the wonderful and unique opportunity of pleading for the amnesty with the responsible advisers of his Majesty, there is every reason to hope that, under the blessing of God—"in Whose hand the heart of the King is"—the longed-for act of clemency may now come about.

For the last ten years I have been in touch with the Exiles, and with true-hearted British people who love Russia. In 1906 I founded the Committee for the Relief of Administrative Exiles in Siberia, a non-political organisation, and it is because of this effort that one of the members of the Imperial Council, now in England, considers me to be the right person to put the case of the Exiles, and of British opinion with regard to this matter, before the Prime Minister. He himself feels the deepest sympathy with the cause.

Your letter will be considered as confidential and private, as far as England is concerned. I will use it only for the Russian Ministers, and perhaps the Metropolitan.

Hoping to hear from you very soon,

Believe me,

Yours faithfully,

SONIA E. HOWE,

*Hon. Sec. of the Committee for the Relief of Administrative
Exiles in Northern Russia and Siberia.*

Three weeks after this unexpected invitation had been given and accepted, I started for my beloved native country with a heart full of joyful hope. The Count had been detained in Italy and France, and as I wanted to be back by a certain time, I travelled on in advance.

En route I made the acquaintance of some other members of the Imperial Council, who expressed great curiosity as to the object of my journey, for they knew that the Count was to take me to Russia. I merely laughed, and replied to their questions that I wanted to do my humble share in strengthening the Alliance, but as to the precise manner in which I was going to accomplish this—that they could learn from our mutual friend.

How someone who did not even belong to the Press could cherish such ambitions was beyond them. I quite sympathised with them, for I by myself could never have achieved anything, of this I was fully conscious ; but at the same time I remembered that the mouse had nibbled through the mesh of the net in which the lion had been caught, and all I wanted was to be like that mouse.

In order not to compromise anyone in Russia, it had been agreed that I should abstain from visiting, while there, those friends who had been the intermediaries between the Committee in Great Britain and the exiles in Siberia. Therefore I had regretfully to limit myself to meeting my relatives and personal friends only, apart from those in authority whom I had come on purpose to see.

CHAPTER II.

CONFLICTING IMPULSES.

IN the train to Haparanda from Christiania, there were a number of Russians from the Argentine. One of them, a fine, tall young working-man, looked at me with an anguished expression, and holding up his finger, which was wrapped in a piece of rag, growled out :

“ Life is not worth living with a finger like this ! ”

“ How can a strong young man like you make such a fuss ? ” I said rallyingly. “ Come, let me see what is the matter.” It proved to be a very bad whitlow, which I immediately took in hand. I invited the man into my coupé, and soon the strained look in his handsome face relaxed into a relieved smile. Very gingerly he held his swollen finger in my little silver goblet containing a hot infusion of camomile, which I had made at one of the stations in a tin with a lid, the only vessel I could find, to keep the infusion hot.

We made friends over the bad finger, and I soon found out that the chief reason for the young fellow's anxiety was the fact that his mother had died from a poisoned finger. He told this to everyone who spoke to him, for quite a number of fellow-passengers began to take an interest in my handsome patient. I reassured him there was no danger of death for him yet awhile.

I would not like to say how many times I found my clean bandage replaced by a green leaf which he had

picked at some station. He declared emphatically that a leaf was much better than fomentations. There was still, however, another remedy which his soul hankered after, and which he wanted me to procure for him.

"Sestritza,"* he said, "do get me some roast onion; if only I could put slices of hot roast onion on my finger, it would soon get well. I treated a bad finger once before this way only, and it got well very quickly."

In order to humour him, I enquired from the Steward of the dining-car whether I could order roast onion, but this delicacy was not on the bill of fare. Meanwhile the finger began to get a bit easier. According to the patient—thanks to the cooling leaf; in my opinion—thanks to the hot camomile fomentation.

At last he got so weary of his finger that he decided to lance it. By this time a doctor had joined us, but his and my ideas of antiseptics found no support from the patient. All I could persuade him to do was to pass the blade of his knife through the flame of my spirit lamp before sticking it into his finger—a performance which he accomplished without wincing.

As the young man was feeling really ill after several sleepless nights caused by his aching finger, I asked him whether he was not perhaps able to pay the difference and pass the night in the second class, instead of sitting on the hard benches of the third class.

"Oh, yes," he said, "I can pay the difference easily; you must help me to get out my money."

With his left hand he drew out of his breast pocket a small, untidy, brown paper parcel, which he handed to me.

*"Sister."

" You will find here one thousand five hundred roubles (£150) ; please take from it as much as you think necessary for paying the difference."

He then told me that, although he was earning excellent wages in the Argentine, he had not been able to resist the call of duty, and was now returning to Russia to join the Army.

" Were you called up ? " I asked.

" No one fetched me," he replied proudly, " I came of my own free will. You see, I argued like this—Russia needs every man at present, therefore I ought to go home and do my share. True, I said to myself, if I stay here I might go on earning good money, but in after years I might despise myself for having failed my Fatherland—therefore, here I am. It cost me ten pounds to come from the Argentine to England, but I am well able to afford it," he added with evident satisfaction.

In the Consulate, at the frontier station, I witnessed an interesting scene. All sorts and conditions of Russians, returning from the Argentine and America, were being questioned by the Consul as to how much money they had with them. An elderly working-man, who had told me previously that he had twenty pounds in his pocket, quoted this sum also to the Consul. Others confessed to having sums varying from two to seventy pounds. All those who had more than £3 had to buy their own tickets. Imagine my surprise when I found out afterwards that my rich young patient, with his £150 in his pocket, had received a free ticket.

" How did you manage it ? " I asked him.

" Very simply," he replied. " When asked how

much money I had, I said, 'none at all'—so, of course, I got a free ticket."

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," I said indignantly, thoroughly disgusted with his trickiness and meanness.

"Why should I pay for having to become a soldier?" he retorted crossly. "Surely it is enough that I have come at all, considering all I could have gone on earning in the Argentine?"

Evidently patriotism and love of money were warring with one another in the breast of this fine specimen of Russian manhood. Had he left the noble feelings of of the Russian peasant behind in the Argentine, where money plays so great a rôle? or was it just human nature, which tempts people of all nations to get something for nothing?

CHAPTER III.

HOME AGAIN.

It was joy to be once again in Russia!

I drew in deep draughts of my native air, missed for so long, and inhaled the delicious scent of the flower-bedecked meadows. My eyes feasted on the beauty of the landscape—the dark pine forests, the graceful white birch trees, the soft bronze bog-land, the golden cornfields and the creamy pink expanse of buckwheat. Even the narrow strips of land along

the railway lines were a delight, covered as they were with wild flowers—pink, blue and purple.

What a relief to be once again in a country of wide expanses, where the consciousness of space involuntarily makes one breathe more freely, and calls forth such a feeling of delight that it can only be expressed by the action of opening one's arms wide. No hedges break up the fields and meadows into little squares, but, uninterrupted before the eyes, open out wide views and a far horizon.

Oh, the beauty of the white nights, when sunset and dawn almost meet, and when, even at midnight, the sky is illuminated by rich red clouds. It was indeed a home-coming—and for the few weeks I was in Russia, my life in England fell back into the furthest recesses of my consciousness and the total absence of letters fostered this forgetfulness. Once only I acted as though in England when, on a broilingly hot July day I remarked to a lady next to me in the tram: "What a hot day!" Her curt retort, "Pray, where do you come from that this is news to you?" made me realise that I was not in England, the "land of weather." I apologised humbly for my apparent silliness and explained the cause and reason of my so obvious remark.

The landscape satisfied my eye, the people my heart. The gracefulness of the birches delighted me as much as the fungi and mosses; the men and women drew forth a feeling of brotherhood and sympathy. The whole nation seemed to be carried along on the crest of a big wave. There was a feeling of moral and spiritual uplift which was a new and wonderful experience. How often did I not hear the same word used

by the most different individuals. They all spoke of a great *Razmaakh*, a word which suggests a broad, generous vastness, something on a large scale.

Everything that happened was of great *Razmaakh*—good and evil alike; millions of soldiers, hundreds of thousands of wounded; great devotion and equally great rascality; wonderful efficiency in provisioning the huge Army by the All-Russian Union of *Zemstvos*—absolute disorganisation as to the food supply of the cities under the control of the official administration; abundance of corn and potatoes in the country—barely enough in the towns; miles of stacked wood along railway lines and forests—but a fuel famine in the capitals. Everywhere masses of soldiers in shirts of “protective” or drab colour, and hosts of officials—military and civil—in smart uniforms, their breasts bedecked with orders and badges of all kinds; great victories—thousands of prisoners taken; tremendous losses of men in the bloody battlefield; on every railway line hospital trains full of wounded heroes; everywhere troop trains filled with patriotic and courageous men going into battle with a smile and a song; churches filled with women praying for their dear ones; large armies of women nursing the sick and feeding the destitute; a war front stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea.

As I stood in front of the gigantic war map in the “Peoples House” in Petrograd, and observed the long Russian line cutting right down from sea to sea, and then looked at the tiny line indicating the British front in France, I realised why some Russians wonder what England is doing. In the Russian line there is unmistakably “*Razmaakh*,” and it is difficult for the

uneducated onlooker to realise all that little British line portends. I told this to an English Colonel whom I met in Petrograd. He declared, and quite rightly, that in fairness to England the line on that map, and indeed on every map, should be carried on right into the Channel, through the North Sea, past the North Cape on to Archangel ; for is it not the British Fleet which keeps open the communication between that Russian port and the munition factories of England and America ?

Then the people—the dear, lovable, simple-hearted, kindly mannered people ! How like old times it was to be addressed again by the homely “ thou ” instead of by the stiff “ you,” and to be talked to by the old servant in the way only Russian, and perhaps Irish, servants of bygone days used to do. We used to belong to them, and to this dear old woman I was still someone to be petted and scolded as though I were a child.

Watching the soldiers, talking to the people, moving amongst the crowds, travelling in trains with men and women of all kinds and classes, gave me a consciousness of being carried along on a great wave. I found myself in a new, fresh atmosphere—there was greater freedom of speech, a wider outlook and higher hopes. Everybody was expecting great things after the war—Reforms, Progress, Happiness.

The millions of soldiers—peasants from all parts of the Empire—were learning new truths. They were having their eyes opened ; comparisons were being drawn, the mental horizon was becoming enlarged. When the war is over, they will return to their distant homes and tell those who stayed behind what they have



PINE FOREST.

[By T. S. Shiskine.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100

seen and learned. One thing the whole nation has learned, and that is to do without vodka. It has become a sober nation—sober and prosperous. The greatest wonder—the most beautiful first-fruits of the blessing which will follow on the war—is this abolition of vodka. This alone has given to the people a Razmaakh.*

On the crest of the wave of patriotism and devotion, sobriety and enthusiasm, of life-hallowing sorrow and soul-racking suffering, a new Russia is being carried along, and so great is the power of this wave that it will sweep away all the old rotten breakwaters.

It was good to be in Russia, and not merely to read the Russian newspapers in England, for they are all full of grievances. Personal contact with the people alone enables one to get a true impression of conditions. The loving though critical eye beholds both light and shade, and the sympathetic and open ear hears what is sweet and tender, as well as what is bitter and hard.

CHAPTER IV.

DISAPPOINTED HEROES.

“Two men have come to see you. They say they are soldiers who have escaped from captivity in Germany; that you know all about them and that they want to speak to you urgently.”

* That the Revolution was brought about with so little bloodshed, and that order was so soon restored, was entirely due to the fact that alcohol was unobtainable.

The old servant, who had been in my mother's service ever since I was a child, and who was now the servant of my cousin and host, looked at me with questioning eyes.

She shook her head and said: "Now what is this you have taken upon yourself?"

"Grousha," I replied, "you dear old soul, I am delighted to see these men—they are heroes. I wonder, though, what they want of me?"

A young corporal and a sergeant were awaiting me in the kitchen, and after a warm greeting I invited them into the drawing-room.

"What has happened?" I asked, utterly taken aback by their serious dejected looks.

Furtively looking around to see whether he could be overheard—evidently a habit acquired in captivity—the tall corporal said to me lugubriously:

"Baryinia,* we have come to share impressions with you!"

"Brothers, what is the matter?" I said, shocked by the expression of tragedy on the men's faces. All the life had gone out of their eyes; utterly broken-hearted they stood before me. I asked them to sit down.

"Tell me all about it; why are you so cast down?"

"Will you come with us and see the place we are lodged in?" the Corporal asked in low, dull tones, "then you will understand everything. Some of our comrades have already been two months in this Dépôt, others one month, and nobody seems to take any interest in them. All that we are provided with

* "Lady"—mistress.

are bare boards—not even a blanket or a pillow, and the dirt of these Barracks is indescribable ! ”

My heart ached with pity and my indignation could only be equalled by the soldiers’ disappointment.

“ Will you come with us now ? ” they said, when they had finished their tale.

“ But are women allowed to visit the Barracks ? ” I asked.

“ It is not only allowed, but quite the usual thing,” replied the soldier ; “ for recruits are collected there and wives and sweethearts are in and out all day long and no one asks any questions.”

Reassured on this point, I was willing to go with my two companions. They were by now looking a little less dejected, for they had implicit faith not only in my will, but also in my power to help them—the dear trusting fellows. Some of the escaped prisoners had been my fellow-travellers *en route* to Petrograd, and I had been able to make things more comfortable for them on the journey.

It was my first visit to Barracks under war conditions. The corporal, in fairness to the authorities, at once told me that these Barracks had been splendidly kept before the war. Now, however, they defied all description ; they were more like night-shelters for the lowest tramps than anything else.

In bare, dirty rooms, I found crowded together some five hundred men who had all escaped from captivity. I shall never forget the sight. In the centre of the spacious but stuffy room and almost filling it, were bare planks on trestles, which stood so close together as to form one huge platform. On it some men lay stretched out full length, their heads

resting on bundles which contained their few possessions ; others sitting tailor-fashion or with their legs dangling. There was not a table or chair in the whole place ! The majority of the men were in civilian clothing which had been given them in neutral countries ; a few, however, were partly dressed in uniform.

I was quickly surrounded by my travelling companions, who greeted me with such evident relief, as if they had pinned all their hopes on my visit.

Never before had I witnessed such a tragedy. My protégés had passed through a psychological crisis, and instead of the happy heroes of yesterday, I found myself surrounded by a crowd of bitter, disappointed and angry men. I felt quite nervous on their account as they enumerated their grievances with loud and fearless voices. One and all were clamouring for me to get them away from " this hell."

" See where they have put us ! " they cried.

" We were not treated like this even in the German lagers—there they gave us mattresses, blankets and pillows—and here, *at home*, look what they expect us to rest on ! "

There was yet another factor which accentuated the unhappiness of the newcomers. My particular friends, proud of their good Dutch and English clothing, had realised with horror that if they too were compelled to spend weeks in these surroundings, their clothes would get as dirty and shabby as those of the men who had been there two months.

" You see, Baryinia," a thoughtful-looking man said to me, " we have all been in other countries ; some of us have seen Paris, others Rotterdam and London, and we know now how things are managed there.

We have been received as honoured guests in London, we have met with great kindness from the Dutch and Belgian, but here in Russia—in our own country—no one seems to take any notice of us whatever.”

Disgust and bitter disappointment were plainly expressed in his mien.

“The least they could do would be to send us home on furlough,” said one of the men.

“Never mind, if we cannot get home,” said another. “If they would even send us at once to the front; after all it is a soldier’s duty to win victories.”

“This enforced inactivity is enough to drive a man mad,” remarked a weary-looking soldier, running his fingers through his hair with a gesture of despair.

Other men began to crowd around me, each one wanting to have his say. They had so many grievances, these poor fellows, and these grievances were all very real. My heart went out to the men and repeatedly I had to say:

“Brothers, I do realise it. Believe me, I will do my utmost to help you.”

Then another lot came up, pushing past their comrades so as to get near to me, and they, too, voiced their complaints. I could not but feel some of their bitterness of heart, because I realised the justice of their grievances, and the deep resentment which was underlying it all. I also realised the danger of letting these clever and resourceful men become so embittered, and thereby strain their loyalty.

I asked some of the soldiers where their homes were—in Siberia, the Caucasus, the Crimea. It seemed that all of them lived thousands of miles away.

"How can a man travel eight thousand miles without money to buy food with? We are penniless; it is not as if we were soldiers who have been drawing pay," said one of the men indignantly.

To make a long story short, it was a question of utter lack of organisation and also of overwork on the part of the Commandant, who had to deal with an overwhelming number of recruits. Evidently it had not been foreseen by the authorities that so many hundreds of men would return from captivity at one time, but it was summer and there had been a steady leakage from the German prison camps.

The soldiers told me that previously several parties of returned prisoners had been sent either to their homes or to the front, but that for the last two months nothing had been done—hence the accumulation of men.

Finally, I had a clear idea of all the grievances, to abrogate which I decided to move every lever.

(1) They were kept at this *Depôt* for an indefinite time; their requests to be sent to the front if leave could not be granted, were ignored.

(2) They were informed that should leave be granted, they would have to pay a fourth part of the railway fare, and that no money would be given to buy food on the journey.

(3) No clothing was given to them.

(4) They received no pay, and thus, being penniless, could not even go to the baths, or buy soap to wash their clothes with.

(5) No occupation was provided for them, and their days and weeks were spent in enforced idleness, loafing about the streets or lounging about the recruiting grounds.

(6) They were refused papers of identification, thanks to which they would have been enabled to apply to benevolent societies for shirts, etc.

(7) In order to get themselves military shirts and other necessities, they were obliged to sell their civilian clothing and wrist watches, which had been presented to those who had passed through London, by the Grand Duke Michael.

The men told me that whenever they tried to approach the Commandant, they were merely sent to some clerk, who sent them on to another, who again passed them on to a third and so on—always without any result. No one had time for these men—they seemed nobody's business.

"Brothers," I said on leaving, "will you have patience for a little longer? Just say to yourselves that this is the last stage of your escape, the last bit of hardship to be endured, and I promise you that I will do my utmost to get things put right."

"God bless you, you are indeed our protectress! Thank you, sestritza, for putting fresh courage into our hearts," they cried.

There is in Russia a very characteristic word, "Khlopotat"—it means taking trouble; it suggests giving no rest to the persons from whom help might be expected, a persistent pegging away until success is achieved. Only one must know the right person to worry, and, fortunately for my soldier friends, I was in this happy position. The very next day one of the members of the Imperial Council promised to bring the sorry plight of these men to the notice of the Premier and of the War Minister.

That afternoon I left for the interior of Russia,

and as the barracks were quite close to the station, some of the men came to see me off. They carried my luggage up the platform and saw me into the train.

"You are the only friend we have," one of them remarked.

"What should we have done without you?" said another.

"Good luck to you, brothers," I replied, touched by their gratitude and fully conscious of their forsaken condition. "I trust all will turn out well, and that you will soon be happy and on the way home to your dear ones."

CHAPTER V.

WAITING WOMEN.

HAVING to wait several hours in Vitebsk for my train, I took a tram ride into the town in order to while away the time. There was very little to be seen, for it was Saturday, and all the shops closed, as the majority of the population are Jews. There were, however, many soldiers stationed in the city, and these were to be seen in every possible and impossible condition and position. I saw them marching in groups and driving about in large carts, watched them transport and carry goods and chattels, to all appearances belonging to some officer. Of the Jews I saw nothing—of the soldiers

a great deal. Austrian prisoners of war were also about. I saw them in a tram—all were laughing and joking.

On my return to the station, I observed in front of one of the station buildings a long queue of old men, women and children. This was my first view of a sight which was to become only too familiar to me. That day, however, it was so new as to be perplexing. Turning to a porter, I asked him what all these people were waiting for.

“Sugar,” he replied, and then he explained that owing to the difficulty of buying sugar in the town, the railway authorities were providing the families of their employees with this necessary article of food.

At last my train came in, and I was able to travel on to Smolensk. There again I had to wait many hours before being able to go on, but I did not mind this, as I love watching the people and enjoy talking to my humble and always friendly compatriots.

At the Smolensk station, the junction for three lines, there was much coming and going. Owing to the war, this provincial town has become an important centre, and the railway station was crowded with soldiers.

I sat down on a bench beside some women. Two young soldiers’ wives, each with a baby in her arms, interested me particularly, and also a deformed girl, with sad, wistful eyes, who stood beside the bench leaning on her bundle, which she had deposited on the seat. She watched the women with the babies intently, and after I had begun talking to these young *soldatki*, the lonely-looking girl crept nearer, and soon joined in our conversation.

I forgot all about my own trouble as I talked to the women. One of them was looking very dejected. Over her shoulder she had a large bundle in a red shawl.

"Why are you so troubled?" I asked.

"How can I help being sad and worried?" she replied, "for someone has stolen my money which I had tied securely into the corner of my shawl. I have been to see my husband, and now I am like someone lost, for I do not know how to return to my village. Other women advise me to beg the money for my fare, but that is awkward."

Her trouble was easily remedied, and with a happy smile on her face she got up to enquire about her train and the cost of the ticket.

"While you go to the booking office, let me have the baby," the hunch-backed girl said, holding out her arms for it.

With the other woman's babe on her lap, the young woman with the wistful eyes looked less forlorn. She cooed to the baby, then, with deft fingers, she began to undress it. From the mother's bundle she took out some garments. Looking up to me she said, apologetically:

"The little one does not seem very comfortable, and I will make it look nice." The plump infant seemed perfectly content to be nursed by a stranger.

While occupied with the baby, she told me all about herself.

"I am a refugee," she said, "and have just come back from Ferghana, where I had been sent. I was very happy there in service, but now all the refugees have been ordered back to Russia, because of the

great heat. I am sorry, for now I must seek another situation," she added wearily.

The *soldatka* returned with good news. A train was due quite soon.

The other *soldatka* was a very beautiful woman, dark haired, rosy cheeked. Her bright get-up gave a touch of colour to the otherwise grey and drab surroundings. She wore a red kokoshnik*, a pink sarafane†, and rows of red beads were around her neck.

"You look very smart," I remarked.

Pleased with my genuine admiration, she replied, smiling, "I have been to get myself and the baby photographed. My husband has written from Khranzia (as she called France) that I am to send him a picture of myself and the boy, for he has not yet seen the little one."

The women told me many interesting things; how they were getting on in the village without their men-folk; and how they did their utmost to keep things going, also why they did not want Austrian prisoners of war to work for them.

"Our husbands would kill us if, on coming home, they found that mischief had happened," they said, expressing what was a general feeling amongst the peasant women.

In fact, a few days later I read a Government Order prohibiting prisoners of war from being given as workmen to households where all the men had gone away—evidently a necessary precaution.

Everywhere in the large waiting-room there were

* Half-moon shaped head dress.

† Peasant woman's pinafore skirt.

groups of families waiting for their trains, many squatting on the ground. My attention was attracted by a nice-looking woman who was talking to some men. I joined the little group and heard her relate her experiences, the tragedy of which lay in the fact that they are the common lot of hundreds of thousands of Russian people at the present time.

"I am a refugee," she said, "and I have come here six days ago. I am waiting for my aunt to join me, and then we shall try to find a room somewhere. Our village was close to the firing line," she related, "and now and then German soldiers would come and ask for food. They were hungry, they said, and remembering that our men might be in the same plight, I fed the enemy. They were bad men," she remarked, shaking her head in disapproval.

"First they asked for food, which I did not mind, but then they led away our cow and the pigs, and then they took my husband away and sent him into Germany. I held out for a little while longer, but when the shells began to burst close to the house I took the children and came here."

"What are you going to do?" I asked her.

"Well, to tell you the truth, I do not know myself. I had intended staying in Smolensk, but the Committee for Refugees advises my going on to some village, as there are no lodgings left in the town."

"How do you manage about food while you are thus living in the station?"

"I go three times a day to the feeding centre," she replied, "and there I also get milk for the children."

Just then her little girl of three toddled up to us.

"She is such a wise one," the fond mother remarked, patting the little mite's head. "Only a few days ago she said to me, 'Mamma, go and work,' and I think I will do as she says. However, I must await my aunt, for she has promised to join me here on Tuesday."

This was Saturday, and so it meant two more days, at least, of sitting in the railway waiting-room.

I suggested finding work for her on my sister-in-law's estate, and this pleased the brave little refugee woman. The gendarme had come up to the group, and was also listening with kindly interest to her tale. Turning to me he said: "Address your reply to *me*, write whether the lady wants this refugee to come, and I will pass the message on to her."

This big burly gendarme had evidently a warm and kindly heart. According to his own statement he had watched thousands of refugees, and his sympathy went out to these homeless people.

CHAPTER VI.

EVENSONG IN THE RAILWAY STATION OF SMOLENSK.

As I neared the railway station on my return from a walk in the town, the sound of church music reached my ears. I found the third class waiting-room transformed; all the benches had been pushed aside, and Evensong was being celebrated.

Peasants, officers and soldiers were reverently and devoutly following the service ; some were kneeling and a few had prostrated themselves. It seemed to me that it was chiefly of soldiers that the little congregation was composed, perhaps because the probability of having to die soon was more real to them than to the others. Every now and then, one or other would get up and walk out on to the platform to join his train for the front. They had committed their souls to God, and then went away to face death as brave men do.

All round the waiting-room people were sitting silently watching the praying men and listening to the music.

Buying and selling at the bar went on in a whisper ; no voice was raised in thoughtless conversation, and if a child spoke out in its high treble the mother quickly silenced it. The whole atmosphere of the third class waiting-room was solemn and uplifting.

The consciousness of reality, the fellowship of suffering, the spiritual comfort emanating from the service, and the beautiful harmonies influenced me too. The hard, dry pain of the last few days, which had made my heart feel like a stone, gave way, and my grief found relief in tears. Suddenly I felt a gentle touch upon my arm, and a caressing voice, full of tenderness, whispered to me : " Barinka, why weepest thou ? "

" Because my mother died only a few days ago, and I was not able to go to her," I said.

" Do not weep, for is she not now in the blessedness of Paradise ? " were her sweet words.

Oh, the tenderness of that peasant woman's sympathy !

A little later I turned round and, looking about me, I noticed a tall lad leaning against the wall, his body shaken with sobs. He, too, did not seem to be conscious of place or time. Had he, perhaps, just heard of the death of his father? Or was the service doing for him what it had done for me ?

I looked at the choir, which was just then singing the *Nunc Dimittis*. The choir-master, an elderly, shabbily-dressed man, was conducting the small choir—three girls, a few boys, and four men. The leading soprano, a good-looking girl of about seventeen, was singing as one who revelled in the beauty of sound. Her mind was evidently not in the words her lips were singing, for she stood in a careless attitude—a far-away look in her eyes. The male choristers seemed distinctly bored. However, to the praying men and to the listening onlookers, it did not matter whether the choir entered into the spirit of the service or no, for the well-known words winged on harmonious sounds carried their message of comfort and hope into every heart.

Among the people who sat along the wall I remarked my friends—the handsome *soldatka*, the hunchback girl, and the plucky little refugee woman. My attention was, however, especially arrested by a beautiful young woman in the national costume of Georgia. She was standing beside her husband, a tall, dark mountaineer. In her eyes was a wistful, questioning look—was she thinking of her glorious mountains? Or did she feel stifled by the hot, dusty atmosphere

of the waiting-room? She looked so utterly out of place in this urban environment.

While the parents were worshipping or quietly watching the service, the children were playing, but softly and noiselessly. One little chap of about four years old was amusing himself dropping a live crayfish into a pail of water, and pulling it up again by the tail. On the floor two wee girlyies were sitting sublimely happy—sucking each other's fingers and beaming with delight.

The kindly gendarme stood near the door, through which the soldiers passed as they rose from their knees to join the train.

The service came to an end; the congregation dispersed and, all of a sudden, the hubbub of the railway station was resumed. The old choir-master was collecting the music, and the girl with the beautiful voice was just starting to leave, when I went up to her.

"You have a glorious voice," I told her.

"Thank you for telling me so," she said with a shy smile, evidently very pleased with my genuine admiration.

The choir-master came up to us, and I asked him whether he could let me have a copy of the *Nunc Dimittis*.

"I cannot let you have my copy," he said, "but if you will come with me to the town, I will help you to buy one. I have trained this choir myself," he added proudly, "and we are now off to another Church. We come here every Saturday, for the service is held once a week in this waiting-room." Then, heaving a sigh, he said ruefully: "I have to pay my choristers a great deal of money."

There was nothing incongruous in the combination of busy traffic and sacred service, and I like to think that for the crowds of passengers who have to wait for hours in that station, or who merely cross it to enter the train, the Eternal is thus brought into the Transient.

We went together to the best music shop in the town and bought the chant I had set my heart on. On my return from the town I had supper, and then, at last, after all those many hours at the railway station, the time came for me to take the train which was to bring me to my own people.

Нынѣ отпускаеши.

Музыка А. КОПЫЛОВА.

Не скоро.

ДИСКАНТЬ
АЛТЪ

Ны - нѣ от - пу - ща - е - ши ра - ба Тво - е

ТЕНОРЪ
БАСЪ

го Вла - ды - ко, по гла - го - лу Тво - е - му

я - ко ви - *Замедлить.*

о - ми ромъ: я - ко ви - дѣ - ста о - чи мо.

я - ко ви -

Прежн. темпъ. *Немного скорѣе.* *Замед-*

и спа - се - ні - е Тво - е, е - же е - си у - го

литъ. Прѣжн. темпъ. *Замедлитъ.* Немного скорѣе.

товаѣ предѣли цемъ всѣхъ лю - дей, *т* свѣтъ во от - кро -

Замедлитъ.

ве - нѣе я - зы ковъ, и сла - ву лю - дей Тво - ихъ и

Прѣжн. темпъ.

сла - ву лю - дей Тво - ихъ Из - ра - ѣ

Медленно.

ля и сла - ву лю - дей Тво - ихъ Из - ра - ѣ ля

pp

CHAPTER VII.

NOT EXPECTED.

THE train slowed down. One of the passengers, who had obtained only standing room and was waiting to get my seat the moment I left it, kindly handed out my hand luggage.

It was midnight. A sleepy porter walked up slowly to me :

" Has the carriage from Sofkino been sent ? " I asked him.

" No, Baryinia, there is no vehicle of any kind here," he replied. " Evidently they are not expecting you."

" They should be doing so," I said, " seeing that I sent a telegram two days ago to announce my arrival."

" What are two days at the present time ! " remarked the man contemptuously.

Meanwhile we had entered the waiting-room, where a few peasants gathered around us when they realised what was the matter.

One of them, a lame man with a club foot, said eagerly : " I will take a horse and ride to your brother's estate, and they will send the carriage at once to fetch you."

I accepted his offer with thanks, and as it was a warm June night I sat down on a bench outside the station building to enjoy the balmy air and the wonderful white night.

A few moments later someone came up to me.

"A carriage has just come for a gentleman who is going to the same place as you are!"

I followed the man into the waiting-room where the station-master informed me that a small vehicle had been sent to fetch "the Agent"—perhaps I would not mind driving with him.

A well-dressed man stepped up to me, bowed politely, and expressed the hope that I would accompany him.

"Olga Nicolaevna is expecting me," he said with evident assurance.

We walked out, and there stood a small springless cart and a young lad was holding the reins.

"What shall we do about my luggage?" I asked.

"I will tie it on for you," volunteered one of the peasants, "and I will also lend the rope. I have been in service with your people," he added, as if to explain his kindly act.

A few minutes later we started, I feeling distinctly uncomfortable. A horrible fear was gripping my heart. "Who was this agent? What might his business be?" I suddenly remembered stories I had read of moneylenders, and of agents coming to claim mortgages. Did matters stand badly with my dear ones, I wondered?

We drove through a charming countryside, over undulating ground, past fields and forest-side.

"I did not know this part was so pretty," remarked the stranger.

"Look at that glorious sky," I said, pointing to the far horizon, which was illuminated by the rays of the sun, although it was midnight. We drove through a village where everybody was asleep, even the dogs, which in daytime run after one and bark angrily.

"I am very interested to see everything for myself," my neighbour on the narrow seat remarked to me genially. "Of course, I had heard that your brother's estate is quite a model one, and also that your sister-in-law is carrying on the work splendidly during his absence. Olga Nicolaevna wants to transfer the insurance of the farm buildings to the company I represent," he added.

"Thank God!" I thought, heaving a sigh of relief, "then after all he is only an insurance agent." The fear of moneylenders vanished.

"Yes," I answered, "she is a splendid manager."

Our drive of some four and a half miles was nearing its end—leaving the village church to the left, and driving along the lake, we passed the farm buildings.

Perfect silence was reigning, but as we drove close up to the house a dog began to bark. There was no need to ring the bell—the dog had aroused the young servant, who, bare-footed and rubbing her sleepy eyes, opened the door for us.

"Diana, be still!" she called out to the furiously barking young white borzoi.

She welcomed the agent as someone expected—but at me she looked with surprise.

"I am your Barin's sister," I said, "and have announced my arrival by telegram."

"You are not expected," she replied.

"Diana, Diana, why do you bark so loudly?" I suddenly heard my sister-in-law call out. She had come from her room, and then, looking down from the parapet into the Hall to see what was happening, she suddenly recognised me.

CHAPTER VIII.

SOME CONTENTED PRISONERS OF WAR.

WE walked across the big, open space in front of the house, when one of the fourteen Austrian prisoners of war employed there as farm labourers, came up and said in German to my sister-in-law :

"Gracious lady, please let me go and work on the field."

"Emil," she said in the same language, "I thought your legs were too bad to work in the fields, but I presume that you are really tired of cutting up clover for the cattle."

"No, gracious lady, really I am ever so much better, and my legs ache less, but I think it would be a shame for me to have been in the country and not to have learned how to harvest."

"Emil, Emil," said the lady, smiling and shaking her head, "you're just tired of looking after the cattle, and you want to stand in the field and boss the women as they work."

"Emil is terribly lazy," she remarked to me as we walked on.

"Gracious lady, you will not forget my request," the man called after us.

I turned round and said to him, "Emil, you are well cared for here, are you not?"

"Ja—leider" (Yes, unfortunately).

I turned to my sister-in-law, who is looking after the estate while my brother is in captivity in

Germany, and said, "I wonder why he said 'Unfortunately'?"

"Emil," she called out, "why did you say 'Leider'?"

The man looked a little confused, and then replied, "Oh, in my part of Germany, 'unfortunately' and 'Thank God' are used in the same sense."

We laughed at this ingenious reply. Indeed, he ought to have said "Thank God," for if it had not been for the fact of being far away from home, and captives of war, these men might have been absolutely happy. No one interfered with the prisoners, and these fourteen men were treated just as ordinary labourers. No one even locked them up at night, as is the case with Russian prisoners of war in Germany under the same conditions, as I had been told by some of our men who had escaped from there.

These Austrians, Galicians and Ruthenians were well-fed, clothed, and housed, and even received some wages.

During my stay on the estate, one of them fell ill, and had to be taken to the nearest hospital. In order to carry out the letter of the law that a prisoner should not be sent any distance unaccompanied, a peasant woman was sent off with him to the nearest town. On her return she reported that as her charge had looked very pale, she had taken a fly from the station to drive him to the hospital!

There is no fear whatever of the majority of these prisoners escaping, for they have quite frankly declared their intention of remaining in Russia for ever. Not so Emil, who, although an Austrian subject, hails from Cologne, and has received a good education. Small

wonder, therefore, that he does not care to cut fodder for the cattle ; but, after all, it was his own choice to come to the farm.

Everywhere in Russia one sees these Austrian prisoners, who seem quite at home. They work on the railroads, in cities, in gardens and workshops. It is merely by their grey uniform that one recognises them.

“ Where is the Russian captivity ? ” is often asked by the men who surrender, as though captivity were a place.

Those who are kept interned are fed exactly as the Russian soldiers are, for to the Russians the prisoners are objects of pity. The moment the foe is a captive, he is someone to be pitied. How different this from the German practice !

“ Germans will have a bad time in Russia after the war,” remarked a soldier to me, who had escaped from captivity from one of the worst prison camps. “ For we ” (he meant the million odd Russian prisoners of war in Germany)—“ we Russians know now what the Germans really are.”

Gone is the glamour that all things German formerly had in the eyes of the people. Gone for ever the feeling of inferiority to a superior race. “ Vilghelm’s ” subjects will not find a welcome in Russia again.

As to himself—“ You see,” said a peasant woman to me, “ he is not really a human being, and, if you will excuse me saying so, he is Antichrist, and he will have no chance of appearing before God, but will go straight into boiling pitch when he dies.”

Among the cattle for which Emil has to cut up fodder are a young bull and a cow—“ Vilghelm and his wife.”

The wife has a silver clip in her ear, as belonging to the Kaiser's model farm in East Prussia which the Russians had taken in the early days of the war. "Vilghelm" was born in captivity of a mother from that farm.

To these two Prussians, at least, captivity is no hardship.

CHAPTER IX.

HEAVY HEARTS.

BEFORE the verandah of the country-house stood a group of peasant girls, healthy, sturdy wenches in brightly embroidered blouses and aprons. They had been working for several days in the fields and were now come for their wages. One of the girls, who seemed to be the leader, enumerated the number of days each one of her companions had been working. Seventy kopecks a day they were paid, but some had been fewer days at work than others. Finally, the sum-total had been reckoned up, and the girls were ready to go home. On former occasions it had been my delight to hear the singing of the peasant women as they returned from their work, their clear voices melodiously floating through the air. This summer they were silent.

"Will you not sing one of your beautiful songs when you leave us?" I said. "We love to hear you sing."

The girls seemed pleased, and looked down shyly ; but then one of them, raising her head and looking steadily at us with a thoughtful expression on her bright young face, remarked slowly :

“ We have not many songs now—the heart is not light enough.”

“ Perhaps the war will be sooner over than we think,” I said.

“ May that holy hour come soon,” was her fervent reply.

CHAPTER X.

THE WORST OF RUSSIAN ROADS.

“ WOULD you care to have a drive ? ”

Of course I welcomed the proposal, and soon after the coachman drove up with two beautiful black horses. We started at moderate pace, but very soon the horses began to fly over the ground, their graceful prancing legs kicking up the dust of the soft country road.

It was hopeless even to attempt to look at the charming landscape—the ripe cornfields and the flower-bedecked meadows. All I could do was to cover my eyes, if I did not wish to get blinded, for every moment little pieces of dry caked mud were being kicked into the carriage by the horses, which were enjoying themselves thoroughly. This drive was a keen disappointment to me, though I love fast driving ;

for what is the good if one has to sit with covered face ?

I thought of the beautiful smooth country roads in England, and, turning to my sister-in-law, I remarked, "Give me Russian horses, but on English roads !"

The next drive was more successful. We did a thing one would hardly do in England—we drove right over the meadows without troubling about roads at all, and then into the forest. There, part of the track was so narrow, and the branches of the trees so low, that we had repeatedly to brush them aside with our arms if we did not wish the twigs to strike our faces. It was, nevertheless, delightful to drive like this into the depths of the forest, for in parts the track was good and free from danger, so that with eyes unmolested by either twigs or dust, I was able to enjoy the beauty of it all.

As we drove home my eyes caught sight of a row of women working in a field, stooping low. They all wore red dresses and looked like poppies.

An Austrian prisoner of war, standing by in a lordly fashion, acted as superintendent of these Russian women.

When the time came to leave for Petrograd, the troika drove up, and the children and I were taken in it to the station. This time I sat so as to be less exposed to the flying dust, and could watch with real pleasure the graceful movements of the horses.

"Our troika is the best in the whole district," said my little nephew with pride ; "whenever somebody very important comes to our neighbourhood, father's horses are always borrowed for the occasion."



A COUNTRY ROAD.



THE COBBLE PAVEMENT OF MOSCOW.

At the station a crowd of peasants was clustering round an old man who was selling birch-bark shoes.

"Do you know that rich ladies are now beginning to wear such shoes?" I said to the pedlar: "boots are getting so dear, and these ladies wish to set a good example."

"What next?" said the old man, quite distressed; "if ladies are wearing bark shoes their price will go up, and what will the poor moujik do then for footgear?"

In Moscow we had to drive across the town from one station to the other.

"What terrible pavement!" I remarked to the driver. "Could you not drive us where it jolts less?"

"What do you want, Baryinia? All our streets are like this, and in order to drive you along the few well-paved streets I should have to make a roundabout journey."

As it was, even by the shortest route, the distance he took us was five miles over cobbles and holes.

At other times it was in Petrograd that driving caused suffering. When I was a child the cobblestones of Petrograd had seemed to be the right thing, for young children and healthy people do not mind being jolted.

As a matter of fact in those old days we never thought of the cobbles, because during the summer months everybody is away in the country, and, of course, in winter the streets are covered with snow, and to drive over the hard, frozen ground is pleasure unalloyed.

Now, however, I felt the deepest sympathy and pity for anybody with spinal trouble who might be forced to drive about in Petrograd.

"Are the pavements not dreadful?" said my English hostess, as we drove along in her motor, for every few moments we had to clutch the seats as we were being tossed up and down. It was when we came to the quay, and to those few elegant streets which are paved with wood blocks, that we thoroughly enjoyed the smooth and swift motion of the car.

The Nevski Prospect, Petrograd's chief thoroughfare, was being repaired in various places. I quoted to my hostess a remark by Bismarck: "The inhabitants of Petrograd are very proud of their wood pavement, and yet they are really never able to enjoy it; for in winter it is covered with snow, and in summer it is up for repair."

He was really not far wrong. Climate in Russia constitutes one great difficulty in getting good roads—economy another.

CHAPTER XI.

A VISIT TO THE TROITSA-SERGEI LAVRA.

It was a hot June day, and a large family party was crowded into the same compartment as ourselves. We soon entered into conversation, and discovered that the two ladies, the little girl, the two young men and two boys were all bound to the same destination as we were—namely, the famous Troitsa-Sergei Lavra.

The little girl looked so white and tired, but she was



ST. SERGEI RADONEJSKI.

[By Nesterov.]



quite as zealous a "bogomolka," or pilgrim, as were her elders.

"She wants to pray for her father who is out at the front," remarked her mother, gently stroking her little maiden's hair, as she lay on her lap. "We often find her on her knees, praying for her father."

At the last station before Troitsa, crowds of people left the train in order to proceed on foot to the neighbouring monastery, in which the parents of the great saint, Sergei Radonejski, the founder of the Troitsa Monastery, lay buried.

A few very ramshackle old droshki stood outside the station; both horses and drivers seemed to belong to the remote past. One of these derelicts drove us to the hostel of the monastery, and all along the path we passed streams of pilgrims, mostly peasants or working people, also people of the lower middle class, all garbed in their very best. Most of the women were dressed in sombre colours, and wore black shawls on their heads.

We drove through a suburb with broad streets, and then up a hill towards the Lavra. The glittering gilded domes had caught the rays of the evening sun. The high, massive walls of the famous monastery formed one side of a large market-place, while opposite was a long row of shops, and the large white building of the hostel formed the third, narrower end. As we drove up through the fourth open side we looked back, and beheld a lovely view of gardens on undulating grounds, and among the trees the onion-shaped domes of churches. One of these was especially striking, as it was painted sapphire blue, unrelieved by any gilding.

We were suddenly transported into an entirely different Russia from that of Petrograd, or even of Moscow. Our poor rickety droshka brought us safely to the hostel, in which those pilgrims who can afford the very moderate charges are put up, but no one may stay here for more than three days.

My sister and I were offered a large room with three windows, partitioned off into two small bedrooms, a tiny dressing-room and a sitting-room. There were only the most necessary articles of furniture ; each bed had a mattress and a quilt, but neither pillow, sheet nor blanket ; these the visitors were supposed to provide for themselves. Everything, however, was spotlessly clean, and an air of freshness pervaded the whole apartment.

We unpacked our holdalls, ordered the samovar to be ready in our room by nine o'clock, and then set off for the monastery. On the way out, I asked a priest how best to get at the library, which I was specially anxious to see. The monk advised me to enquire for Father Klavdia, the librarian.

It was Saturday evening, and the tiny shops dealing in ikons, crosses, and wooden mementoes were shut. They looked like barnacles stuck against the big, stone walls.

Joining the stream of pilgrims we entered the great gates. We passed under the archway, the walls of which are beautifully decorated with frescoes illustrating the life of St. Sergei, one of Russia's most loved and most popular saints.

The founder of the Troitsa Monastery was a man you could not help loving, a man whose life was pure and lowly, who loved God and man, serving his

Maker in prayer and devotions, and spending his strength in doing good to his fellow-men. The luminous personality of Saint Sergei stands out boldly against the dark background of Russian life in the 14th Century. The "Wonderful Old Man," as he came to be called, was one whose life was a fulfilment of the beatitudes, and his memory has been cherished for centuries.

Around his life a cycle of legends has grown up; the pious people believe in his miraculous powers, and consider him to be a saint whose intercession is effectual.

The monastery having acquired renown through the saintliness of Saint Sergei, became in course of time more and more famous. From this centre light and love went out to the ignorant and the needy, and in time of famine its granaries stood open for the poor, and for the great it served, too, as a place of refuge in times of danger. Every building within the precincts of the monastery is connected with the name of some famous ruler, and the rich decorations of the churches, the costly treasures they contain, the wealth of its ikons, many covered with jewels, prove the fact that this sanctuary is justified in its claim to be a place of peculiar importance.

The nucleus of it all, the centre around which this whole compound of beautiful churches, chapels, halls, belfries and scholastic buildings, has grown, is the tomb of the humble founder of the monastery, St. Sergei Radonejski.

Having been directed by a kindly monk to the church to which we should go first, we entered the Troitsa Cathedral. The building was so crowded that

we had no chance of penetrating any further than the spacious porch, but we did not mind this much, for even here we were surrounded by worshippers.

It was indeed uplifting to be amongst people whose very faces were full of a quiet and holy reverence ; at the same time our sympathy went out to those whose looks betrayed the anguish of their hearts.

We stood among the crowd following the service, and every now and then a wax taper was handed us from behind, to be passed on, until someone close to the great candlestick, which stood before certain specially sacred ikons, could place it in one of the little candle-holders.

The heat of a June night, the crowds within the building, and the hundreds of burning candles made the atmosphere stifling. Some of the people fainted, and a father, with the apparently lifeless form of his son hoisted upon his shoulder, pushed his way desperately through the crowd to the open door.

We slipped out of the church, and going up to a rather pompous-looking monk, who was sitting on a bench in the garden, I said :

“ Father, would you kindly tell me where I can find Father Klavdia ? I have come from England ; I want so much to see your famous library.”

“ Father Klavdia is now taking part in the service. Come to-morrow,” he replied.

“ I am very sorry,” I answered, “ but I leave to-morrow at ten o’clock, and even if I cannot see the library, I would so much like to be shown over the monastery, and perhaps you could direct me to someone who would take me round.”

The good-natured monk asked us to wait for a

moment. He went into the church, returning a few moments later with Father Klavdia himself, whom I told that I was a Russian living in England, and that in studying the material for my book, "Some Russian Heroes, Saints and Sinners," I had made a careful study of St. Sergei's life, and was therefore naturally interested in the Troitsa Lavra.

I also told him that my object in writing that book was to enable the British public to understand Russia better. Father Klavdia became all eagerness.

"I cannot show you the library," he said regretfully, "because it is closed until Monday, but I will show you all I can."

True to his word, he took us into various churches and chapels, showed us the tombs of all the saints and abbots who lay buried there, and told us the cost of the massive silver coffins. St. Sergei's tomb, however, we could not see that night, as service was going on in that church.

The kindly monk took us into the refectory—the trapeznaya—in which monks and male pilgrims have their meals. The walls were decorated with pictures, and at the upper end of the hall hung a gigantic candelabrum, which he told us had been carved by Peter the Great. One of the pilgrims wandering about looking at the pictures, seeing that the monk explained them to us, said to her companion, "Come, let us listen to what the Father says." Our guide, however, frustrated her expectations, for turning round he said rather curtly to the women, "Go away and pray."

He next took us to a little building erected over a miraculous spring, the waters of which are said to

have healed many sick, especially blind people. Two boys were in the act of drinking the water out of wooden spoons, and we bought some from the monk in attendance.

As we came out of the building, Father Klavdia pointed out the high belfry close by, which had been built in the reigns of three rulers, and told us that the bells weighed 8,000 pouds (320,000 lbs.).

It was, however, when he took us into the monastic buildings and showed us the room which had served as a hospital in the days of Ivan the Terrible, that I began to feel at home, for now we stood on the historic ground which I knew so well. The monk led us to the top of the high wall, which in days gone by had made the monastery an almost impregnable fortress. Along this broad wall, which is some fifteen feet in breadth, we walked, treading the flag-stones which here and there had been worn into grooves by the feet of generations of monks, our guide meanwhile telling us the thrilling history of the famous monastery.

He showed us the spot where the attacks of the besieging Poles had been fiercest in the year 1608, and pointed out the aperture through which boiling tar had been poured down upon them. Then he pointed out to us the tower from which Peter the Great as a lad used to shoot wild duck, and related many other incidents of interest.

Father Klavdia seemed delighted to meet with someone from England, who knew the history of his beloved monastery, "as well as, if not better, than he did himself," as he politely, but not very truthfully, put it.

As we followed him along, we looked down into the quadrangle of churches and gardens, and upon the large

building of the Moscow Seminary, while on the other side, looking through the holes in the battlements, we saw extensive orchards and several large buildings which are now being used as hospitals for the wounded.

The monk told us of what he called a "gratuitous" attack made upon the monastery by the newspapers, which accused it of not doing enough for the war.

"They do not know what they are talking about," he said, "only 300 of the brothers are left. All the lay-brothers and seminarists have been called up, and we who are here are nursing the sick, and are housing and feeding daily some 4,000 refugees and soldiers. Apart from this daily expense, the monastery has given one million roubles in cash to the war funds."

At this very moment, I saw some soldiers below in the yard, setting trestle tables in preparation for a meal.

We now came to the Whispering Tower, a freak of acoustics, and having asked my sister to stand in the middle of the tower, Father Klavdia told me to go into a corner with my face to the wall; he himself crossed to the opposite corner, where he placed himself in the same position as myself.

Suddenly I heard a voice asking me distinctly, "Can you hear me speak? If so, whisper quite softly a reply."

Then turning to my sister, in his ordinary voice he said, "Did you hear anything?"

"Not a word," she replied.

He then related how during the siege of the Troitsa Lavra in the 17th Century, a monk on guard in this tower had, to his surprise, been able to overhear everything said underneath the walls on both sides, and

thanks to this a plot was discovered. Since then architects have tried in vain to find out the secret of this tower, but have all come to the conclusion that it must be simply a freak of nature, and no deliberate plan of the builders.

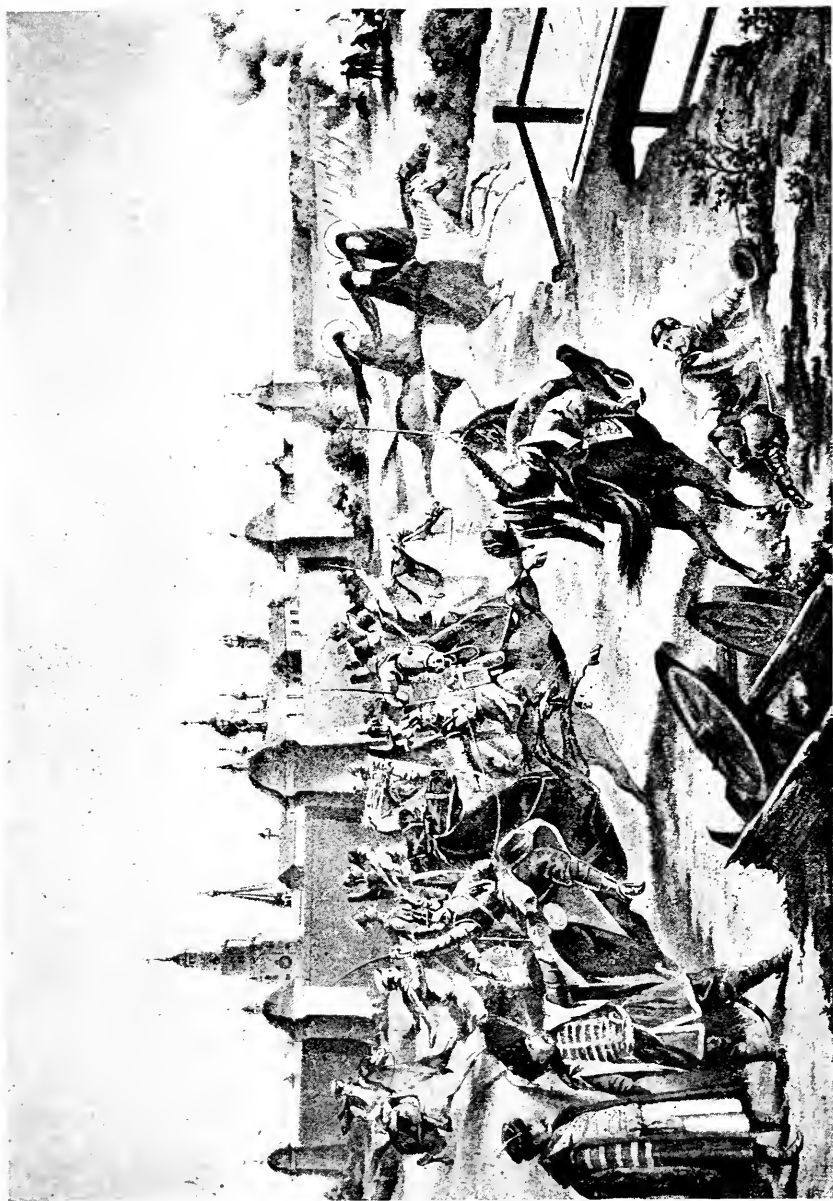
The last bit of the wall was "grilled off," and pointing to it, our guide remarked, smiling, "Here His Majesty enjoys a smoke when he honours the monastery with a visit."

Our walk of about a mile along the wall now came to an end.

We thanked the monk in a practical way for having spared so much of his time in order to take us about. He invited me heartily to come back some day for a longer time to study as much as I liked in the library, of which he was the custodian.

On our way to the hostel we passed through the archway, and now we gave ourselves time to look more closely at the frescoes, which we found to be most attractive paintings, executed by a monk after the manner of Nesterov, the famous modern illustrator of the life of St. Sergei. We had already been struck by the frescoes on one of the churches, and as we studied the gentle faces of the saints, we realised that in nearly every case they were those of ordinary Russians. The monastery has a school of ikonography, and from the few samples we saw it certainly deserves the renown it enjoys.

Still within the grounds were several shops, the largest a bookshop, in which the publications of the monastery were offered for sale. As I walked around the spacious showroom, I almost felt myself back in Northumberland Avenue, in the shop of the S.P.C.K.



THE SIEGE OF THE TROITSA LAVRA BY THE POLES IN 1608.

A little further on, close to the gate, we came to a small, wooden shed, in which were displayed ikons, crosses, beads, etc.

Here I asked for pictures of the beautiful frescoes, but, unfortunately, there were none for sale. Then I enquired whether I could not at least get some illustrations of the history of the monastery, but even about this there was a doubt.

We had a nice talk with the monk in attendance, who asked us many questions about England. Seeing my disappointment at not being able to get any of the pictures I wanted, he asked me to return early next morning, as he would try to look up a few old coloured illustrations now out of print.

It was quite late when we walked out of the gates ; we found the large market-place almost deserted.

On the table in our room at the hostel stood a samovar singing away to show us that the water was boiling. There was also a jug of milk and some bread which the hostel had provided for us. We made tea, and after a very frugal supper, lay down to rest, for at four o'clock we wanted to attend the early service. We slept soundly on our sheetless beds, our heads resting on the pillows we had brought with us, while our rugs did service for blankets.

Never shall I forget the peace and solemnity, and the wonderful spirit of hope which pervaded the atmosphere of that early morning hour, as we crossed the quiet market-place and entered the monastery. Crowds of people were silently wending their way towards the gates, and soon we were merged in the throng of worshippers. It was all so harmonious, so intensely human, and yet so gloriously divine.

In the Cathedral my attention was suddenly arrested by a young woman, who was leaning against the wall, and so sad was her face, so dejected her whole attitude, that I whispered to her :

“ What ails thee ? ”

With a voice trembling with emotion she replied, “ I have lost the slip of paper on which were written the names of those I wished to be prayed for. I cannot write myself, so now I have come all this way in vain, and that is what grieves me so.”

I volunteered to write out a fresh list for her, and having borrowed a pencil from a Cossack who stood close by, and a slip of paper from another man, I wrote at her dictation.

“ Poor, unhappy Maria—that is myself,” she said in explanation—“ I am nearly blind, and the doctors can do nothing for me, so I have come to pray to Saint Sergei, perhaps he will restore my sight.” Then she went on, “ And now, Barinka, write, Ivan and Olga, and Feodor and Irene, Matriona, Akoulina, Peter—I think that will do,” she said, heaving a sigh of contentment.

Her face all radiant with hope, she took the slip of paper to the priest who collected all the slips with the names of those to be mentioned in prayer—no light task was his.

What we had been unable to do owing to the crush the evening before, we now managed quite easily, and soon found ourselves close up to the costly tomb of the humble St. Sergei. His relics have been approached with awe and reverence by hundreds of thousands of pilgrims ; nobleman and moujik, Grand Duchess and peasant woman, have bent over and

kissed what the devout believe to be his uncorruptible body.

For a long time I stood watching with deep sympathy the apparently endless procession of men and women as they came to do homage to the Saint. I saw women hand their infants to the priests on duty, who lifted them up in order to let the children kiss the relics of the Saint.

If it had not been for the rather intermittent chanting of a few monks, the impression I received would have been that of perfect silence, in spite, too, of the sound of the heavy tread of feet on the stone floor. I think this aural illusion of silence was due to the overpowering impression of solemnity; all that could jar was excluded. We left the church, having witnessed what has been an ordinary occurrence for hundreds of years.

In every one of the several churches within the monastic grounds services were being held. We visited some of them, and everywhere found a crowd of devout worshippers.

At seven o'clock we went to the little ikon shop, and the same monk who had served us the previous evening placed before me a packet of cheap, coloured prints of the monastery, illustrations of historic events, such as the siege of the Poles in 1608, and scenes from the life of the Saint.

"This is by special favour; they are for you only," he remarked. "I received orders to show you all I have."

Evidently my guide, the librarian, had said a kind word for me.

My sister and I talked with the brother about Saint

Sergei, his wonderful life and goodness, and the monk expressed great surprise and joy at finding someone from England so well acquainted with that good man's life.

"I am a Russian," I said, "although I am now a British subject, and live in England," for my sister had told him that I had come from there.

He asked some very intelligent questions about the Church of England, and seemed much surprised that the invocation of the saints was not one of her practices.

"Not that we do not consider them holy men," I assured him.

"Yet you do not pray to them?" he remarked in a tone of regret.

"We consider the intercession of our Lord all-sufficient," I replied.

He looked so pleased when I told him that we had much in common in our form of service, and he was specially gratified to know that we used a Collect by St. Chrysostom, for "Ivan Bogoslov," as this great divine is called in Russian, is the best known of all the Church Fathers.

Putting his hand behind him into the case of ikons, the brother suddenly said to me in a very gentle and deferential manner:

"May I ask you the name of your angel?"

"Sofia," I replied.

Then quickly withdrawing his hand from the case, he handed me a beautiful ikon of St. Sophia, with her three traditional daughters, Faith, Hope and Charity.

"Will you take this?" he asked me.

I felt deeply touched by his kindly thought, for evidently he had heard my sister call me "Sonia," the diminutive of Sophia, and had planned this little surprise. I paid him for the ikon, but accepted his gift of a narrow, blue ribbon, into which were woven the words of the 91st Psalm.

"This girdle," he explained, "our soldiers wear around their body when they go into battle. Wives, sweethearts, mothers, give them these tokens, entrusting them thereby to the protection of God."

Surely a nobler charm than a mascot, I thought to myself.

Before leaving, we asked the monk whether he had already passed into the higher grade of monkhood.

"No," he said sadly, "nor do I think that I ever shall. I am only fit to sell in this shop."

Then looking at me with a wonderfully humble expression, he added, "I am a great sinner."

"And so am I, but we both have a Saviour Who died for us," I said, stretching out my hand to him, which he grasped with a look of joy in his eyes.

I think his humble soul rejoiced at this bond of union between us.

"I will always remember you in prayer," were his last words to us.

We passed out of the gates, and immediately found ourselves in a different world—the sacred and ecclesiastical was suddenly exchanged for the mundane and secular. The little shops which seemed plastered to the walls of the monastery, were all open, and the big market-place was crowded. Buying and selling were in full swing; peasants from the outlying villages

had brought their wares, and by arranging themselves face to face in two long rows, they formed two passages, along which the buyers were moving. Many of the peasant women were sitting on the ground beside their baskets of eggs, vegetables and fruit, which were set out in tempting display for pilgrims and citizens alike, for although we never saw anything of the actual town, we were told that a populous city has in course of time grown up around this monastery.

To my Russian heart the food exhibited for sale was just beautiful. I am afraid, however, my English friends would have turned away with disapproval from the baskets of brown, red and yellow toadstools. There was also baked milk for sale in long, narrow earthenware jars, and "tvorog," made from sour milk, and thick sour cream, which, eaten together, taste delicious. We walked slowly through the market, bought an earthenware bowl, had it filled with tvorog, and some sour cream poured over it.

Close to the hostel stood many carts: some full of hay, others laden with sacks of corn and oats. We talked to the peasants in charge, who told us that this market was held seven days a week in the early morning.

Pigeons were fluttering all around us, attracted by the seed which lay scattered on the ground, but the bolder sparrows were helping themselves out of the sacks. This I pointed out to one of the men.

"Why should they not?" he remarked; "God has created them also."

We made our breakfast of the delicacies we had bought, and as we had no soft sugar, we poured some boiling water on some lump sugar, and found that this

syrup did excellent service. Having packed our holdalls, we paid a very modest sum for our night's lodging, and took our departure with genuine regret.

"I know now where I shall go in future when I want to spend a really restful time," I remarked.

As we drove away I cast a last glance at the old-world market-place, the high massive wall, and the monastery, with its domes of glowing colours and its high graceful belfry.

As we neared the station, we met crowds of pilgrims who had just arrived by train, and thus in endless succession, the bogomoltsi and bogomolki—"Pray to God people" as pilgrims are called in Russia—come to the Troitsa-Sergei Lavra to pray at the tomb of Saint Sergei.

CHAPTER XII.

A LINK.

ON my arrival in Petrograd I rang up on the telephone to enquire as to when Count Olsoufieff was expected from England.

"He arrived last night," the servant replied, "and he wants to see you immediately."

Leaving my luggage at the station, I drove to his house, where I found the Count in his study surrounded by half-packed suit-cases and trunks, table and chairs

littered with letters ; he was looking at his accumulated correspondence. We discussed plans and decided that I was to await the arrival of the Empress Dowager from Kiev, as she was expected in a few days, but should she after all not arrive by a certain date then I was to crave permission to go to her to Kiev.

“ Will you come with me ? ” I asked.

“ Oh, no,” the Count replied smiling, “ no one may approach their Majesties without being invited. You will have to go by yourself,” he added.

The Count promised to see the Minister of Justice as soon as possible, and I was to ring him up in a few days to find out what he had been able to arrange, and meanwhile I was free to visit friends in the country.

CHAPTER XIII.

SPEED AND SUCCESS.

IN Russia things are done either very slowly or exceedingly quickly, and when I rang up on the appointed day to receive my marching orders from the Count, I was told that the Minister of Justice was expecting me that very day, and would I please be at the Count's at 1 o'clock.

Here was a dilemma ! It was about 11.45 and the next train was due a few minutes after twelve. I was in a place some forty-five minutes' journey from town, and into the bargain my friend's house was a good distance from the station ; also her coachman

was not at home. Still, I had to catch the train at all costs.

"I must catch the next train because I have to appear before a Cabinet Minister. Would it be possible for me to be driven to the station in that little cart?" I said pleadingly to the clerk in the Estate Office where I was telephoning, pointing to a small vehicle just outside the door.

"No, that is not possible," he replied; "for it belongs to the forester and he is not here at present."

"Well, then, could you lend me a vehicle?" I persisted.

"Gladly, if we had a horse, but we have none."

"But my friend has horses," I said, "so will you lend me a man?"

"That we can do. I will send one at once," the clerk replied, and I felt relieved.

Returning breathlessly to my friend's house I informed her that I had to be off at once, and to my joy she gave me the comforting information that her coachman had unexpectedly turned up.

With lightning speed the horse was harnessed while I quickly packed my things, and off we went as though on a race—I was in time.

I felt happy and grateful to be safely in the train, for it would have been most awkward not to be in time for the first interview with the man in whose hands the fate of the exiles lay.

"We are lucky to have caught the train," a fellow traveller remarked to me, "for the express train due at this time has been delayed at the frontier, and this is an extra train."

In Petrograd I jumped into a taxi, but was compelled

by circumstances to pay an exorbitant sum for a short drive, the chauffeur, however, promising to cover the distance in five minutes. This he did, for we drove at break-neck speed.

At the stroke of one I entered the Count's study.

He looked very serious and greeted me with the damping words :

" Your affairs are not going well."

" Our affairs," I corrected him.

" Well, all right, our affairs," he replied. " I have had a talk with Mr. Khvostoff and he declares that it is quite impossible to grant a general amnesty. I assured him that you had no intention of asking the impossible ; then he made the excuse that he did not speak English, but I informed him that you spoke Russian. In fact, he is not at all anxious to receive you, but finally I persuaded him to grant you an interview. He expects you at one-thirty. Now—let me tell you what I think you should say to him." And the kind Count gave me minute directions.

I believe he thought that after all a man might know better than a woman how to tackle such a delicate subject as putting the desirability of an " amnesty " before a Minister.

" You are taking it all in ? " he asked me, suddenly interrupting his carefully-thought-out speech.

" Yes, I am all attention," I replied. " Please go on."

I admired the Count for the trouble he was taking, for he is not naturally a very energetic man. I knew quite well that what he was now doing was for him an exceedingly unusual thing, and I felt all the more grateful to him for taking up the matter so thoroughly.

"By the way," the Count remarked, "I am somewhat disappointed with the letters you have brought from England" (I had left them with him). "I expected a much more definite expression of opinion, and all your correspondents write so guardedly."

"You do not know the English as I do," I replied, "for then you would realise how very strongly worded these letters really are for Englishmen, who are usually so very reserved."

"Then there is one letter which has rather too many criticisms of the Government."

"Never mind," I said, "it is very justified criticism and perhaps it may have some effect."

"Come back to me after you have been to the Minister and tell me all about it," were his parting words.

I must admit that I felt rather nervous as I drove along. It was a tremendous responsibility which was entrusted to me.

However, I took courage at the remembrance of Nehemiah's experience, who, when asked by the King "for what dost thou make request?" prayed to the God of Heaven and said. . . .

CHAPTER XIV.

INTERVIEWS WITH CABINET MINISTERS.

FROM behind a massive writing-table the Minister stepped forward to greet me.

"I am very grateful to you for receiving me," I said, but before I could proceed any further he curtly interrupted me with the words :

"A general amnesty is impossible."

"Your Excellency," I replied, calmly, "I have not come to ask for the impossible, but in England they are very much interested in the fate of the exiles, and if you could see your way to release a number of them it would give great joy to the British people."

"I can assure you that His Majesty is constantly liberating twenty to forty prisoners at a time," he retorted.

"Then why does he not let the world know about it?" I asked.

"Because he likes to follow out the precepts of the Gospel and not to proclaim his good deeds."

"Excuse me," I replied, "the Gospel also says, 'Let your light so shine before men,' and surely it would make people rejoice to know of these acts of clemency."

The Minister was silent for a moment. "No, it is quite impossible to grant an amnesty," he said very emphatically. "At present the people are

without leaders, but let these men return from exile or imprisonment and the masses will rally round them."

I smiled inwardly, yet I saw that from his point of view there might be a certain amount of reason in his fears and therefore merely said :

"At least you need not let the exiles starve, for those sent out by administrative order have an absolutely insufficient allowance."

"The administrative exiles do not come under my jurisdiction," he said, eagerly. "They belong to the Department of the Minister of the Interior, so it is to him you must speak about them."

"Very well," I said ; "but will you kindly enable me to do so?"

"Oh, yes, with pleasure. I will give you my card," and after writing a few lines of introduction, he handed it to me.

The audience was over. I felt very disappointed, for if the Minister of Justice was so uncompromisingly opposed to an amnesty what had I still to hope for? However, though disappointed, I was not disheartened.

My next interview took place in much pleasanter surroundings, namely, in the private study of a true lover of art, one of the assistant Ministers* of the Premier.

This gentleman received me in a most friendly way. "But you know I have really nothing to do with exiles," he remarked, "only my friend wanted me to see you, and of course I am delighted to do so. So you have been to Khvostoff—well, what did he say?"

*Tovarishtch-Ministera (comrade of the Minister) is the title of the officials in charge of the various Departments of the Ministry—such as the Police, the Zemstvos, etc.

I related my experiences, and he, shaking his head, said regretfully, "What a pity that you let yourself be passed on to Stepanoff. It was a clever dodge of Khvostoff's to shift the responsibility on to him."

We had a long talk and I told him all I hoped to achieve.

"You must see Stuermer," he said in his impetuous way, "and you should also see the Empress."

"I am willing to see any and everybody—with the exception of Rasputin," I replied.

"But, my dear lady," he exclaimed excitedly, "why not him? He is so influential; but please do not think that he makes or unmakes ministers. All he does is to make hall porters for a consideration of 25 Roubles."

"No, thank you," I said, "no Rasputin for me! I wish to use clean means only."

He laughed—"If you were drowning and a plank were thrown to you, you would not enquire whether it were clean or not, and just now you are trying to save those who are drowning."

My persistent refusal to see Rasputin highly amused my host.

"Surely you will not leave Petrograd without seeing him—it is like going to Rome and not seeing the Pope! Still, if you do persist in your conscientious scruples, at least go and see him when your business is done."

I shook my head.

Meanwhile Count Olsoufieff had arranged an interview for me with the Premier, Mr. Stuermer, who resided at the Home Office on the Fontanka. The Count and I were shown into a long narrow waiting-room. The forty minutes I had to wait gave me

sufficient time to study the engravings on the walls, representing all the Ministers of the Interior since the days of Alexander I. The first of them, Count Valoueff, reminded me very much in appearance of the seventh Earl of Shaftesbury. There were also very large portraits in oils of aggressively martial looking gentlemen, who were not at all suggestive of Cabinet Ministers.

I asked one of the officials who these Generals were.

"The Chiefs of the Gendarmerie," he replied.

So these were the Heads of the dreaded Third Division—the Secret Police—instituted by Nicholas I. to safeguard his Empire against reforms and other "dangers"!

At last it was my turn to go into the Premier's study.* A tall, benevolent-looking man, rather like a successful merchant in appearance, cordially invited me to tell him my story. He thanked me for having taken up the case of the returned prisoners of war, and then listened with evident interest to all I had to tell him of British feeling (as it had come to my personal notice) with regard to an amnesty, and of the effect the release of exiles would have on British public opinion.

Then I spoke of the terrible plight of the exiles. He was surprised to find me so well informed, and asked me how it came about. I told him about our Committee in England and how I had founded it in response to the appeal of an Englishman, living in Russia, who had witnessed the sore distress of these exiles. I told the Premier that I had not come to

*Mr. Stuermer was imprisoned at once after the outbreak of the Revolution.

plead for men who had broken laws common to all civilised nations, but for those whose political opinions and activities were opposed to Russian official ideas only.

I now related to the Premier that our "non-political" Committee consisted of members holding widely differing views on most questions, and that even strong Conservatives had joined because they had such sympathy with the exiles and were so opposed to the system. It was at this point that I told Mr. Stuermer that I myself was not a revolutionary, but decidedly a Liberal. "It is since I left Russia that I have learnt to think politically," I said, "for in England I came to realise what other people consider necessary for civic life. Only during the last ten years have I come into contact with Radical Russians. In fact, I know personally very few revolutionaries, but," I added, "I do know and love Prince Peter Kropotkin. I consider him one of the best men and the greatest idealist I have ever met."

Having made my point of view quite clear and having no apprehensions of being misunderstood, I spoke up:

"People who, in other countries, would be considered law-abiding and useful citizens, you not only banish, but let starve into the bargain," and I gave him instances.

"I do know that their allowances are insufficient," the Premier replied, "and, in fact, I have only just now been asked by the Governor-General of Siberia to increase them."

"Would it not be better to set them all free?" I said. "It would be so much simpler and cheaper."

"It is not a question of expense," he said in an off-handed way.

Then I told him what Mr. Khvostoff had said about the absence of leaders, and added: "Nevertheless, you will have a Revolution, not stirred up by regular Revolutionists, but by the people themselves. The storm is brewing."

"What makes you think so?" he asked with evident interest.

I gave him my reasons: the growing discontent owing to the rise of prices, the hatred against speculators, etc., etc., and also the threats which, to my surprise, were now openly uttered. Never before, I warned him, had I heard such plain speaking wherever I went.*

The Premier looked thoughtful and admitted the possibility of an outbreak. "We shall have to prepare for it," were his words.

"Would it not be better to remove the causes of the discontent?" I asked.

Mr. Stuermer then wanted to know what the Minister of Justice had said. This gave me an excellent chance to plead the cause so near my heart. I ended up by saying: "An amnesty would be like a rainbow against a dark sky. There is so much sorrow and suffering in the

*As a matter of fact, I had been told by friends, who had not hitherto held Liberal views, that there were no revolutionists now, for "we are all revolutionists."

Again, other friends prophesied: "Revolution is sure to come when the war is over, and there will be barricades, with the whole nation on the one side and the Palace on the other." I had also frequently heard the common people say: "At present we are keeping quiet, but once the war is over we shall move, and we shall begin with those in high positions."

world, will you not be the means of bringing goodwill and joy ? ”

“ Those sentiments are quite in accord with the mind of His Majesty,” he answered.

“ You have power,” I said—“ use it for good.”

“ I have only as much power as His Majesty chooses to give,” was his politic reply.

“ All the more reason to use it well. If His Majesty has limited his power in order to let you, his Minister, share it, the responsibility lies with you.”

He was most sympathetic all through, and as I was not distracted by fear or self-consciousness, I was able to speak quite freely.

“ Why make everything a crime ? ” I asked. “ I have seen in Westminster Abbey the tombs of certain people who, had they lived in Russia, would in all probability have been exiled to Siberia.”

I spoke to him of the lack of safety-valves in Russian civic life, and pointed out that Revolutionists were the *product* and not the *cause* of political troubles and difficulties. I then related an experience I had had with two young girls whom I had met in Paris. Both had been condemned to death, but both had managed to escape. One of these girls had written down her story for my benefit, as I was anxious to know what had led her to become a Revolutionist. “ Could you let me read it ? ” Mr. Stuermer asked, “ it would interest me greatly.” “ With pleasure,” I said, rejoicing inwardly that he should for once read about the misdeeds of his underlings.

It was I who rose when I felt that I had said my say. The Premier accompanied me back to the waiting

room and expressed a wish to see me again on my return from the South.

The Count, who was acting the part of fairy-godfather to me, and whose magic wand opened every door—so that all I had to do was to walk in and shake hands with the Ministers—asked me whether I was satisfied with my interview.

“Yes,” I replied, “it is a great thing to have had the opportunity of speaking so plainly and so uninterruptedly to one in power.”

CHAPTER XV.

AN INTERESTING HOUR.

THE Count had asked me to wait for him in his house while he continued his talk with the Premier, to whom he was relating his experiences in the Allied countries.

I knew he was due to leave Petrograd that evening for Moscow soon after 9 o'clock, and I wondered how he was going to manage to speak to all the various people who were awaiting him in the house, for in every room there was somebody. Nevertheless, he managed it—then came my turn.

“Will you dine with me and two friends?” he said genially.

I accepted the invitation with pleasure, although I had not the faintest idea as to who his friends were. A pleasant surprise awaited me. “They know all about

you," the Count added, introducing me to two thoughtful-looking men—Mr. Gouchkoff*, the leader of the Octobrist Party, and Mr. Vladimir Lvoff†.

We five drove in Mr. Gouchkoff's motor to a well-known restaurant. It was the first meeting between the Count and his friends since his return from his journey, and the two Duma members wanted to hear all the Count had seen and heard. It was intensely interesting for me to listen to the discussion of the situation, and to hear what the Count had to tell. I listened to his graphic descriptions of his impressions, and to the conversations he had held with statesmen. He was quite enthusiastic, and I realised how useful this journey had been. I longed that the practical advice which a leading statesman in France urged as a necessity for victory, might be followed out at once. I realised that although the public of France and England may be ignorant of affairs, conditions and needs of Russia, not so the leaders, and I felt grateful to know that Russia had such true friends in these men.

The two Duma members listened with thoughtful mien. Now and then they had to bring the Count back to his point when he strayed from the political subject into byways of less serious matter.

There was so much to tell, and time was all too short, for there was the train to catch. Mr. Gouchkoff lent his motor to take the Count to the station. *En route* we passed his house on the chance of picking up his luggage. Still, he was quite ready to start without it, having his sleeping-car ticket in his pocket.

*Minister of War in the first Provisional Government.

†Head of the Holy Synod.

As we drove to the door, the housekeeper rushed out in evident despair : " This is how our Count always acts," she exclaimed excitedly. " He leaves everything to the last moment."

It appeared, however, that the train was due to start twenty minutes later than the Count had thought, and this was lucky, for otherwise he would have missed it. The servants bundled his suit-cases into the motor, put a half-filled Gladstone bag on my lap, and then handed me odd articles which they brought out, one at a time, for me to squeeze in as best I could.

" Do see that the Count leaves nothing behind ! " the housekeeper called out after me as we started off.

" By the way," said the Count, " you had better go and see your Ambassador. I lunched with him yesterday, and meant to tell him about your enterprise, and then after all I forgot to do so. You see, before leaving England I told the Russian Ambassador about you ; he fully sympathises with the object of your journey, so now I think Sir George might as well also know about it."

The Count caught the train just in the nick of time, and I drove back in the motor to the Town Duma, where Mr. Gouchkoff was awaiting it.

Some time previously I had been told on the telephone by a lady that I should go and see Lady Georgina. " Why should I ? I do not know her," was my reply.

" *She* wants to know you, for I have told her about your experiences with the escaped prisoners of war." " I don't think I shall go and see her," I said, " for if she asks me about the object of my visit to Petrograd I shall not know what to answer."

Count Olsoufiev's request, however, had altered the circumstances, and having introduced myself by telephone to Lady Georgina, I was very kindly invited to come to the Embassy.

It was a great pleasure to meet Great Britain's official representative and his charming wife, and in both of them I found people who really loved and understood Russia. How good for Russia to have such a British Ambassador at this critical time, I thought.

CHAPTER XVI.

SOMETHING, BUT NOT EVERYTHING, HAD BEEN DONE.

THE same two men—non-commissioned officers—who had called upon me previously, came again to see me.

"Everything has been done as you suggested," they said. "There has been an enquiry, and all the men who arrived before we did have been sent home on leave. They have been given a free passage on the railway, food, money, and the accumulated pay due to them have been paid out."

"I am delighted," I said; "but what about yourselves; how is it you are still here?"

"Well, Baryinia, that is why we have come to you again. The Commandant says that he has no money left for us, and that we will therefore have to pay the fourth part of our fare, and shall only receive one

month's pay, at the pre-war rate of 50 kopecks (1s. 2½d.) a month instead of the 70 we ought to be getting—nor shall we be given any food money. They haven't supplied us either with any uniforms or underclothing. It is true that some of us have received boots, others caps, and a few, overcoats; but not one of us has been given a complete outfit, therefore, we have sold some of our civilian clothes, and even our precious wrist watches, so as to buy shirts and look once more like soldiers, and, if absolutely necessary, to help towards our fare. But, Baryinia, we have come here to ask you to help us to get away without having our fare to pay."

"I will do what I can," I replied, and promised to pay them another visit at the barracks.

I went the same afternoon, and again found over five hundred men, for new parties had just arrived. It was heart-breaking to think that the same tragedy of hopes dashed to the ground was being enacted so frequently.

This time, too, I was surrounded by irate, indignant men, and the words they uttered and the criticism they expressed, if overheard by an officer, might easily have led to punishment. The men, however, seemed too bitter to care. Once again I promised to do all I could, even if I had to go to the Emperor himself. When they heard this, their faces lit up with hope. They believed that it was their Sovereign's will to honour them.

"We are heroes," one soldier remarked*, and indeed

*This is not so conceited as it sounds, for the word "hero" is frequently used in folklore as well as in popular language to signify a brave man.

they were, for amongst these particular five hundred men I counted up fifty who had been decorated with the St. George's Cross.

On my return home I rang up the same influential man who had helped me before, but he had left Petrograd. "Never mind," I thought, "I have other friends, and if only I can get one of the big men in authority to come and see for himself how matters stand, all will be well."

The very next day I was able to tell the story of the stranded men to one of the chief officials of the Red Cross, whom I had come to interview on an entirely different matter.

"But this is awful," was his comment; "it must be seen into at once. Will you go and see the Prince of Oldenburg?"

"Yes, gladly," I replied. "However, I also want someone to come with me now at once, in order to see how these men are lodged. Could you not come yourself?"

The kindly official had, however, to decline my invitation, for the very good reason that he was already overworked; but he promised to arrange for an interview with Prince Alexander of Oldenburg, the Commander-in-Chief of the *Service Sanitaire* of Russia, and President of the Red Cross. I was delighted. At last I seemed to have come across the right man to help me in the matter which I felt to be so urgent.

I was on the point of leaving when he called me back and said: "Would you mind going into the next room and writing a report on all you have told me?"

"With pleasure," I replied, but with a sinking heart, for it was lunch time and I was very hungry. Nearly everyone in that busy office had a glass of tea beside him. Plucking up courage, I said to the officer: "Might I have some too?"

"Of course," he answered with a smile, and a few moments later an orderly brought me in a glass of tea and some sandwiches. Refreshed by these good things, I sat down and wrote my report.

About half an hour later, another official came and informed me that with regard to my audience with the Prince of Oldenburg, a reply would be given me later on by telephone, as his Secretary was out at the moment. I was also handed a slip of paper bearing the name of General Khabaloff, Commander-in-Chief of the Petrograd District, whom I was advised to go and see, in fact he was holding his weekly official reception that very day. "Everything depends upon him," the kindly officer told me.

I drove home in high spirits, my heart full of hope and gratitude for having been thus led on to the right track. In the evening I was informed by telephone that H.I.H. the Prince of Oldenburg was quite willing to receive me, but that owing to illness he could not see me that week, but would I ring up on my return from Kiev.

CHAPTER XVII.

A CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR.

ONE afternoon we discussed all kinds of topics.

"Sestritza," said one of the soldiers, a gaunt, thoughtful-looking man, "is it true that at the present moment Baptists and the followers of Tolstoi are being persecuted? It is two years since I was taken captive, and of course, I do not know whether what some of the men have told me is true."

"I am afraid there is a good deal of truth in it," I replied.

"Sestritza, can you tell me whether the Emperor of Japan is married?" another of the men suddenly asked.

"I am sorry, but I really do not know; why are you so interested in this question?"

"Well, several of us were talking together, and some said that Japan had become Russia's Ally because the Emperor wants to marry one of the daughters of the Tsar. Now, I personally believe that the Emperor is already married, but I wanted you to settle this point for us."

Gradually our talk turned on to the subject of religion. The man who had asked me about the persecution of the Baptists broke into the conversation with the question: "Are not Buddha and Confucius just as good as Christ?"

“ I will answer your question in the words of a Chinese who, at different times, had followed both these teachers,” I said ; then I told him the most poignant story I had ever heard on the essential difference between these founders of religion and Our Lord. All the men listened with keen interest. Then, turning again to the others, I continued the conversation which had been interrupted.

It was not long before the thoughtful-looking man once more put a question.

“ But what if a man does not believe in God at all ? ”

“ That man is very poor, however rich in earthly goods he may be, and I pity him deeply,” was my reply.

Evidently my interlocutor was a thinking man, and one whose mind was not at rest. I decided to try and have a private chat with him. The opportunity for this came quite soon.

When we were alone together, I asked him quite frankly : “ Are you a Baptist ? ”

“ No, Sestritza,” he replied, “ but I have occasionally attended their meetings,” and then, looking at me steadily, with serious questioning eyes, he added : “ I want to ask you something. Can you tell me how a man is to know whether he has the Holy Spirit ? ”

Thank God, this question I was able to answer.

The soldier and I had a real time of fellowship, and several of the things which had perplexed him I was able to explain.

“ It was in captivity that I found firm ground for my feet to stand on,” he said. “ The awful wickedness of the Germans which I witnessed, and the terrible

sufferings amongst the prisoners of war, made me turn to God. I do not regret what I have gone through, for had it not been for that, I would not have known that such wickedness or such suffering existed; and I might have remained a self-satisfied and careless man. Now I have but one desire," he added, his face lit up with holy joy—"to do good and serve my fellow-men." Then suddenly his face was overcast, and his eyes assumed a puzzled look. "I am in deep perplexity, and I do not know what to do," he said gravely, "for I have come to realise that I can no longer go and kill anyone, but that from henceforth I must only do good. Now, if I confess myself to be a disciple of Tolstoi, which, after all, I am not, I shall be locked up in prison for refusing to fight, and what good am I to anyone if I am behind prison walls?"

"Ask to be transferred to the Red Cross," I suggested, full of sympathy for this genuine conscientious objector.

"They will not accept me for that, for I am far too strong and tall," he said, looking down ruefully on his magnificent limbs.

We had a long talk, and amongst other things, he told me that what had drawn him to the Russian Baptists was the cleanliness and tidiness of their homes, and their sober and upright lives.

"Now, what makes these people clean, tidy and sober, and what prevents them from ill-treating or beating their wives, I said to myself; they are Russians just the same as we are—and I thought of my many friends, who drank too much. I decided to see for myself. So I began to watch the Baptists, and then I discovered that the only thing in their lives different from mine

was their faith. I attended their meetings—then the war broke out, and captivity followed. You are the first person with whom I have spoken about these matters for the last two years," he added.

"What about your comrades in the prison camp?" I asked.

"They did not seem to understand or care for these things."

Before parting I said to the soldier, "I will see whether I can put in a word for you at the right quarter, and perhaps you will, after all, be transferred to the Red Cross."

"That would indeed be good," he replied, hope shining out of his eyes.

Before parting, the big, burly soldier knelt down beside me and, probably for the first time in his life, offered up an audible prayer, which was simple and to the point.

Evidently he was deeply perturbed about the persecution of the Russian Sectarians, for he was already in the doorway when he suddenly turned back and, with a look of sorrow and a voice full of deep concern, said: "To think that in our own Russia truth is being driven out!"

As it happened, only two days later I met an influential man to whom I related this soldier's dilemma. "Let him shoot into the air if he really objects to killing anyone," was that gentleman's advice. "By the way, there is no fear of his having to fight again. No soldier escaped from captivity is sent back into the firing line. It would not be fair to let these men be taken prisoner a second time—they would be shot by the Germans."

I told the soldier the good news. His face became radiant with joy. "Our prayer has already been answered," I said. With deep emotion he replied, "Yes, thank God!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN GERMAN PRISON CAMPS.

"WHAT happens when you are caught?" I asked my soldier friends.

"It is bad, very bad," they said, looking quite scared at the mere thought of this awful suggestion. Then one of them told me that the usual punishment for attempted escape was fourteen days in a dark cell; also to be tied to a pole with the feet off the ground for two hours a day until forty hours have been made up; and each day after being taken down from the pole to receive twenty-five strokes with an elastic whip. During this fortnight warm food is only given every fourth day and later every third. In another camp the punishment consisted of being put into punitive barracks, where they were made to run every day for two hours, having at fixed intervals to throw themselves full length on the ground, jump up immediately and run on again—a most fatiguing process.

There were also camps in which men were kept chained to poles, while in others they were actually tied to them with spiked wire. "This was no longer done after the visit of Madame Samsonov," said one of the men from a notoriously bad camp. "She came to inspect our camp on behalf of the Red Cross," he explained for the benefit of his comrades. "When she detected this cruel practice she refused to continue her inspection, and thus, for fear of getting into trouble, the Commandant of that camp abolished this form of torture."

The escaped prisoners of war told me many details of life in captivity. Much of it was a terrible indictment against Germany; it was a recital of wanton cruelty and of systematic brutality. The men who had escaped from different camps compared notes in my presence, and finally they arrived at the conclusion that the experiences of those who had been in Zaganz, Zelle and Wann were the worst. "It all depends on the Commandant," they said.

They were always fair, these Russian men, and several spontaneously tendered the information that they had met—here with some kind convoy, there with a humane Commandant. In one camp it was an Alsatian officer of whom they spoke with gratitude. "He always saw to it that we received our parcels and letters." Others, however, exclaimed: "Our Commandant was a brute, many times have we seen our letters flung into a furnace."

Perhaps the greatest hardship the prisoners of war have to endure is the perpetual torment of being asked to go to work in munition factories or elsewhere in order to help their enemy; and for refusing to do so, they

are persecuted and punished. Many give in from sheer despair, especially as they are bullied and threatened without respite, and, in some cases, even tortured. As an example of bullying, my friends related that they were informed that if they refused to work, as desired, it would be noted down on their papers that they had worked in munition factories. "Then, when peace is declared," they said to us, "and you return home, you will be shot for having done so. If, on the other hand, you do go to work for us, it will not be noted down and so you will escape punishment."

It requires tremendous moral courage to hold out under such circumstances. All the more honour to the men who do so. I was told by some soldiers that in one instance, three hundred men thus persisted in their refusal and, infuriated by their firmness, the German officer shouted at them: "Let him who has the courage to die for his conviction, step forward." Forty men did so.

They were led away and their comrades considered them as good as dead. As it happened these particular men were not shot, but many such brave soldiers have paid with their lives for their refusal to help Germany.

It amused me to hear these men, quite uneducated soldiers, speak of international law. "We told the Germans that they had no right to ask us to do such work, for it is against all international law. We were willing to do any other work, as long as it was not directed against our own people."

One tall young sergeant confided to me that he had had the satisfaction of causing considerable annoyance to the authorities of his camp, and this without being

found out. "I wrote a poem on 'Vilghelm,' " he said, "how, thinking the world was getting too sleepy, he decided that it was high time to shake old Europe up a bit. This he did, convinced that it would be all gain for him and that all the other sovereigns would acknowledge him finally as their overlord; instead of which he found himself, to his horror, forsaken and alone, and then 'Vilghelm' had nothing more to say. I wrote this poem in latin letters although in the Russian language, and posted it in the letter box of the camp. The officials were so annoyed with it that a generous reward was offered for information as to the author."

The young soldier laughed with delight. He evidently thoroughly enjoyed his own work. "No one ever earned that money," he said, "and if you like, I will write the poem out for you from memory." Which he did.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ST. ISAAC'S CATHEDRAL OF PETROGRAD.

NOT hemmed in, like St. Paul's, not far away from the centre of the city, like St. Peter's, but in the centre and yet standing on a free and open space, thus does the visitor to Petrograd behold the great cathedral of St. Isaac's.

It is a beautiful building in its perfect proportions. The granite pillars, the carvings in relief, and the giant angels on the corners of the roof, the gilded cupolas and fine dome, all strike the onlooker as beautiful and noble. Within the cathedral there is beauty and wealth, and an air of solemnity reigns even at times when no service is being celebrated. Involuntarily the idle sightseer treads softly as he enters the lofty church, for it is essentially a place to pray in, not merely one in which to admire men's skill and art.

There are the costly pillars of lapis-lazuli and of malachite, and in the centre of this gorgeous beauty are the wonderful gates which form part of the sanctuary screen, and the *ensemble* of blue and green and gold gives a very vivid and living impression. The large pictures between the pillars are all in mosaic, as, indeed, is every picture in this church. The original paintings have been replaced by mosaics, and the academician who carefully added piece to piece felt content in doing his work, for, "Was it not for eternity?" as he himself told me with joy and pride.

On the Sunday morning the great cathedral was crowded, and as I stood close to the railings which divided the congregation from the central space in front of the sanctuary gates, I realised what a hold such a service must needs have on the Russian people.

Beautiful music, sung by exquisite voices, filled the vast dome. Tall, stately priests, in golden vestments, walked to and fro. Several aged Bishops stood in silent worship, facing one another on either side in front of the raised platform, upon which the Archbishop stood who was conducting the service. As he blessed the people, holding a tall golden candlestick

in each hand, he waved these in the air, crossing them in order to bless the people with the sign of the cross. All heads were bowed—silently, devoutly, the congregation followed the ritual. The only words one could hear distinctly were, "Let us pray unto the Lord," chanted by the Archdeacon, in a bass voice so deep and melodious that it sounded like the deep tones of an organ. In response to his call to prayer the choir chanted in high, clear, silvery tones, "Lord have mercy upon us." There were no other sounds but those of the chanting and of the gentle patter of feet on the stone floor, for more and more people were coming into the church, but so soft was the sound of their footsteps that it merely added to the sense of mystery which pervaded the building.

Suddenly, the great sanctuary gates swung open, and we beheld the Sanctuary—there, glittering in the rays of the sun, stood the golden model of the cathedral. Beside it stood two three-branched candlesticks, and on both sides of the altar, deep back in the recess, two gigantic seven-branched candlesticks, and as the background to it all, the transparent figure of the risen Lord on the stained glass window.

A sound like the tinkling of silver bells, so soft and high, floated towards us from the Sanctuary—boy's voices chanting. Then the Archdeacon lifted the costly copy of the Gospel, all studded with jewels and sparkling in the light, from off the Holy Table where it is kept, and accompanied by choir and clergy, he walked down the church to the Archbishop, who kissed the Holy Book.

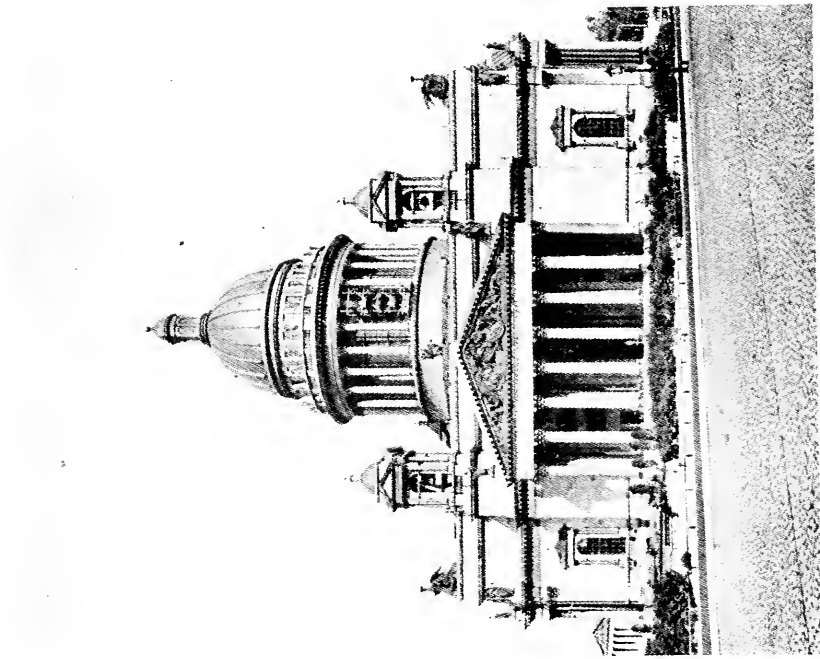
As I watched the stately figures of the gorgeously-clad priests moving gracefully over the soft carpet,

as I listened to the tinkling of the bells on the vestments of the Archpriest, as I saw the Holiest of Holies unveiled before the people, I felt transported in imagination to Jerusalem, to the days of Priests and High Priests, of sacrifices, ritual and symbols.

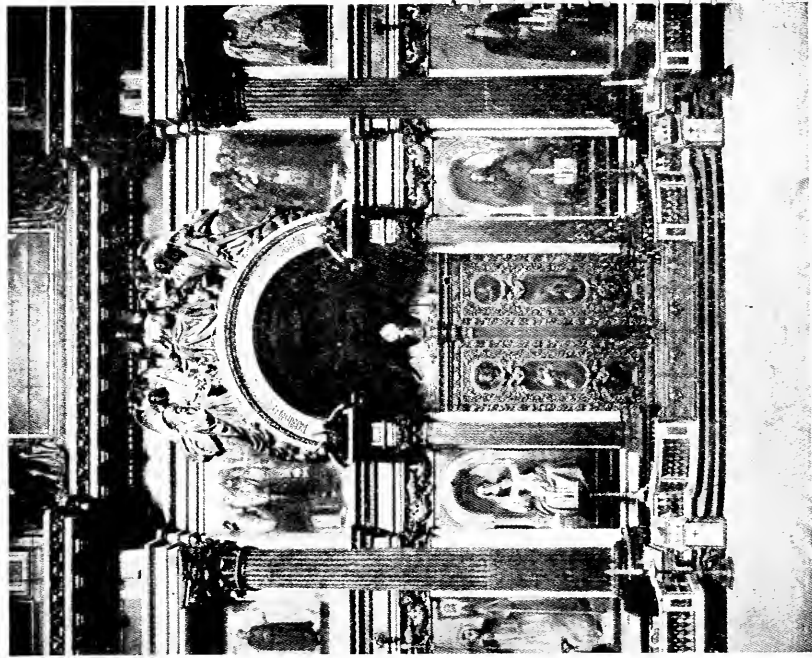
There was one thing, however, I would have liked to have added to the beautiful service in St. Isaac's Cathedral. That this was a service of prayer and communion with God one could see in the faces of the people, and could even feel in the atmosphere, but what I missed was an audible message from the Word of God. It was the people, through the clergy and choir, calling upon God for mercy, or praising Him with Hallelujahs, but there was no audible message from Him, unless it might be the consciousness that He hears prayer.

A little to one side was a shrine of a "Miraculous" Ikon of the Virgin, and while the crowd which followed the service seemed to be more in a general attitude of devotion, those individuals who came to pray before that Ikon had personal needs to plead. Forgetful and unconscious of those around them, conscious only of their sorrow and need, men and women knelt down and prayed earnestly. The almost passionate way in which the one or the other woman signed herself with the sign of the cross, or prostrated herself, told of anguish, anguish hardly endurable.

Oh, the War and its terrible sacrifice of life; "For men must fight and women must weep" seems to be the motto of the present day; but the Russian women are worthy of their men in bravery, and if they weep when pouring their hearts out before God, they also take their share in the brunt of the battle. It



CATHEDRAL OF ST. ISAAC IN PETROGRAD.



THE SANCTUARY OF ST. ISAAC'S CATHEDRAL.

is they who work on the fields and gather in the harvest, and who fill the places vacated by their men-folk. It is the *soldatka*, the soldier's wife, who has to keep things going while her man is out in far-away France, or on the North-western or the distant Caucasian front.

As I watched the worshippers, my heart overflowed with pity and sympathy for the mourners, and especially for the anxious young wife, whose lips moved so quickly, and whose hands were clasped in agonised supplication. Was she praying for her dear one lying wounded in some field hospital far away at the front?

Before the Ikon of the Virgin, candle after candle was lit—the outward expression of the inward prayer of the Russian people. Men and women, officials decorated with orders, peasants, elegantly dressed ladies, soldiers and little children, they all stepped up to the Ikon and kissed it. Oh, the fervour, the longing expression in the eyes, which pleaded for an answer to the prayer offered! As I followed the service and looked at the devout worshippers, the thought came again and again to my mind, "This people draws nigh unto God with the heart, and not merely with the lips."

I have been in St. Peter's in Rome, where I felt chilled, and the attitude of the congregation jarred upon me. There, the pompous ceremony seemed to be a performance which the people had come to watch, but here, in St. Isaac's, there was worship. It is true that the service was one of symbol and ritual, but somehow it struck me as living and real, and in perfect harmony with the solemn beauty of the vast cathedral. Even the clergy in their gorgeous vestments were in

keeping. If only there had also been an audible message from the Word of God, which could reach the intellect and the conscience of the loving, devout people !

There is no false shame about the Russians, and not merely on Sundays, but also on week-days, they come to pray in the cathedral. Not in crowds, but singly, they come up to the sacred image, prostrate themselves before it, kiss it, or merely put a waxed taper into one of the little holders of the large candelabra, which stands before the Shrines.

I have also watched with interest soldiers from distant parts of the Empire walking quietly about, awed by the beauty and grandeur of the cathedral, and studying the beautiful pictures.

Solemnity and reality, these are the two impressions the visitor to St. Isaac's takes away with him.

CHAPTER XX.

PETITIONERS ALL.

I DID not feel at all awed by the grandeur and solemnity of the waiting-room of the important general. I had a smile in my heart, for was I not going to see the man who alone could help certain men I was interested in. A nice friendly orderly took my card and requested me to sit down. It was a large, lofty room, and on the

walls hung the life-sized portraits of the last three Emperors, and of several Grand Dukes who had been chiefs of the Guard Regiment of which this building was evidently headquarters.

A middle-aged lady who sat beside me began to talk vivaciously. "I am accustomed to luxury," she said, gesticulating, "and I do not see why I should have to go without it. If I cannot get my affairs settled satisfactorily in this Department, I will write a petition to the Empress Dowager, and I am sure she will help me."

She thereupon volunteered the information that it had been notified to her that her husband, who had been missing since the Japanese War, was now considered to be dead. Hence she would no more receive his salary, but only a pension, and, of course, this meant the loss of luxury which she so intensely resented.

A tall, handsome officer, to whom the orderly had handed my card, now approached me, and politely asked my business. He would pass it on to his Chief, he said, and then tell me whether an interview would be granted. I handed him a document I always carried about with me—he looked at it with surprise and unfeigned interest, and then requested me to wait for my turn. The loquacious widow tried a shot at him, but he remained unmoved, and in reply to her eager protestations advised her—with a twinkle in his eye—to write a petition. He declined to bring her cause personally before the Chief.

It was most interesting to watch the people who were waiting in this lofty ante-room. Probably I was the only one who had not come on a personal matter, hence my detachment and feeling of perfect ease, but

I sincerely sympathised with the others who, one and all, wore a pre-occupied look.

There sat an officer, his face so pale and so transparent—the empty sleeve hanging limply down by his side told the tale. It hurt to look at him.

An elderly colonel was walking up and down the parquet flooring, impatiently waiting for his turn to come to be asked his business. At last, the amiable officer on duty turned to him, and I heard that he suggested his going to see some important personage at Peterhof.

“How do I go there?” asked the nervous colonel.

“By train,” was the laconic retort of the officer, as he moved on to the next applicant.

The orderly took pity on the poor provincial officer, and did his best to explain matters to him, but repeatedly I heard the colonel say excitedly—and there was despair in his voice—“But I have come all the way from Moscow. . .” The officer on duty had a humane heart, and seeing the colonel’s obvious distress, he suddenly said something to the exasperated petitioner, from whose face the clouds vanished; beaming all over with contentment he went to a couch and sat down.

A young woman was nervously walking about the stately room, an anxious look on her beautiful face. Impatiently she tapped the parquet flooring with her high-heeled shoes; she arranged and re-arranged her smart hat. At last, the adjutant opened the doors of his Chief’s sanctuary and bowed her in.

The place beside me was now occupied by a quietly dressed woman, who was brimful of good news, and unable to restrain herself from sharing it with someone.

“Don't you think the General is very kind?” she asked me in a whisper.

“Yes, I think he is,” I replied.

“Now, don't you think he is really a good man—always nice, and not merely now?” she went on. “For I am sure he is,” she added with conviction. “You see, he has been so full of sympathy for me, and has kindly listened to all I had to say, for all I want is my right. My husband—well—I have no words in which to describe what kind of man he is—in a word, he doesn't send me any money. Does he really think the child and I can live on air? I know quite well what his pay is, and as he persistently refuses to answer my letters I have at last come here, and now I have been promised that one-third of his pay will be sent direct to me. I only want what is my right,” she repeated, looking with happy eyes at the officer, who had such a gentle and confidence-inspiring manner.

The door of the Chief's room opened, and with bouncing steps the young lady came out. Her face was radiant; she seemed so happy as to be hardly able to restrain herself from laughing outright with joy. She smiled a farewell at the officer—she nodded genially to the orderly, and almost danced out of the elegant waiting-room.

“His Excellency will see you, madam,” the officer said to me, and a moment later I stood before General Khabaloff,* the man who since the war had become the arbiter of the destinies of so many.

* This General finally used his power to command the troops to shoot on the people during the recent revolution, and was in consequence imprisoned in the fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul, by order of the Provisional Government.

CHAPTER XXI.

TWO GENERALS.

THE aristocratic-looking general listened to my story with an expression of utter incredulity on his face ; at last he said—a faint, sarcastic smile playing about his mobile lips—

“ What you tell me, madam, sounds exactly like— ”

“ Fairy tales,” I suggested, interrupting him.

“ Yes,” he said, “ precisely so, just like fairy tales.”

“ Yet it is as true as Gospel,” I answered emphatically.

The general rose from his seat and walked into the next room, returning a few minutes later with another high military official, whom he introduced to me.

“ Will you kindly repeat to my colleague what you have told me ? ” he said.

The other general listened with astonishment to all I had to say.

“ The men tell me that the Commandant is not actually unkind to them, but that he simply takes no notice of them at all. In fact, so far as he is concerned, they do not seem to exist,” I said to the two generals, quoting the exact words of my soldier friends.

Turning to his colleague, the unbelieving Excellency remarked : “ I request you to go yourself to-morrow to the barracks to look into this matter.” Then addressing me : “ Believe me, madam, it is impossible, according to Army Regulations, to give these

men free tickets to their homes ; soldiers must pay the fourth part of the fare unless they are invalided home, in which case they are, of course, sent free of cost."

" Your Excellency, these men are not soldiers on leave—they have escaped from captivity, and are therefore penniless. How can they be expected to pay their fares, and what are they to buy food with on the long journey ? "

" I presume they would like to travel second class and eat in dining-cars," he said sneeringly.

I felt very indignant at his callous behaviour. " It is quite unnecessary to speak like that," I retorted boldly. The haughty man took my rebuke good-naturedly, and changed his tone considerably.

" You are right," he said at last, apparently more amenable to reason. " If the men are granted leave at all, they should be enabled to make use of the permission ; only there is no law which entitles them to the help you want us to give them."

" Well, frame a new law," I suggested.

" That takes time," he replied, " a Commission will have to sit on it first."

" What about the Emperor ? " I asked, and the general, bowing as if in obeisance, said, with a glimmer of fun in his eyes, " The Emperor's word is law."

" Then I shall ask His Majesty to pass such a law," I replied, as I rose to go.

At least I had succeeded to the extent that a General of the Staff was going in person to enquire into matters—which was already something gained.

CHAPTER XXII.

DEJECTED RECRUITS.

CLOSE to the entrance to the barracks on the Zagorodni Prospect some peasants were sitting close to the window, which opened low to the ground. An interesting lot they were to look at—very raw and full-bearded, older in years than ordinary soldiers. I stopped and began to talk to them.

“We had been considered unfit, and now, after all, they have sent for us,” a gawky, red-haired man of some thirty-five years of age said to me peevishly.

His eyes had a look of blank astonishment. Apparently he could not realise the fact that he was in barracks in Petrograd instead of in his village. There was nothing martial about him; he had long red hair and beard, and dreamy pale blue eyes, and I wondered what kind of a soldier he would make.

Beside him on the window-seat, sat a little, wiry, black-haired man, and deeper in the gloomy room on benches, leaning over the table to listen to our conversation, were some five or six moujiks. They all looked terribly dejected.

“If at least they would give us something to eat,” remarked one of them. “Here we are since last night, and no one seems to trouble about us.”

It was late afternoon, and crowds kept passing the window, wives and sweethearts accompanying their menfolk. Officers and soldiers also were going to and fro all day long, but no one seemed to have an

eye for these forlorn moujiks. The overworked staff of officers and clerks were working at high pressure, but nevertheless there was disorganisation and muddle, for the number of recruits was enormous; thus it was that the dejected, hungry, unfit men, had to wait their turn to be made fit. The question was—when?

I asked them about the effect of the abolition of vodka. The wiry little man answered eagerly:

“Oh, it is just splendid; life is so different, and our women are so happy.”

“Yet they are trying to make us drunk,” said another of the unfits, who had come out of the gloomy room to the window. “Formerly, they used to grumble at us men for drinking, and now, after all, it is they who are tempting us by concocting all sorts of intoxicating drinks,” he went on.

“Not so the women where I come from,” remarked a third man. “Everybody is sober, and no one drinks khanja.”

The sad “unfits” forgot their sorry plight for awhile, discussing conditions of life since the abolition of drink. A whole group had gathered around, and all were taking part, giving their opinions. The conclusion they arrived at was that it was good to be without vodka, and that those who tried to evade the law by illicit distilling, or by brewing horrid mixtures, were only few.

“Of course, some drink *denaturat* (methylated spirits). There is, however, no chance of their getting drunk many times on that stuff, for it kills them,” remarked a thoughtful-looking moujik.

I had to go, and having wished the men good luck, I parted from the group of pronounced anti-vodkaists.

The red-haired man still looked with astonished eyes about him. The new, strange surroundings had quite bewildered him. I wondered would a little glass of vodka not have changed his depression? Life might have seemed less puzzling to him, but there was no vodka to be had, and I could only hope that he would soon get a square meal and then be put into uniform.

A few days later I again passed the same window—it was open, and I peeped into the gloomy room. It was empty. Evidently the link of organisation had been joined, the men had at last been taken notice of, and had been put in the right place; and I hoped that soon the magnificent spirit of the soldiers would take hold of the dejected men. They were, to be sure, older men, who had left wife and children behind; besides, it was the time for gathering in the harvest. Perhaps their despondency was partly due to anxious thought as to what might happen to their corn.

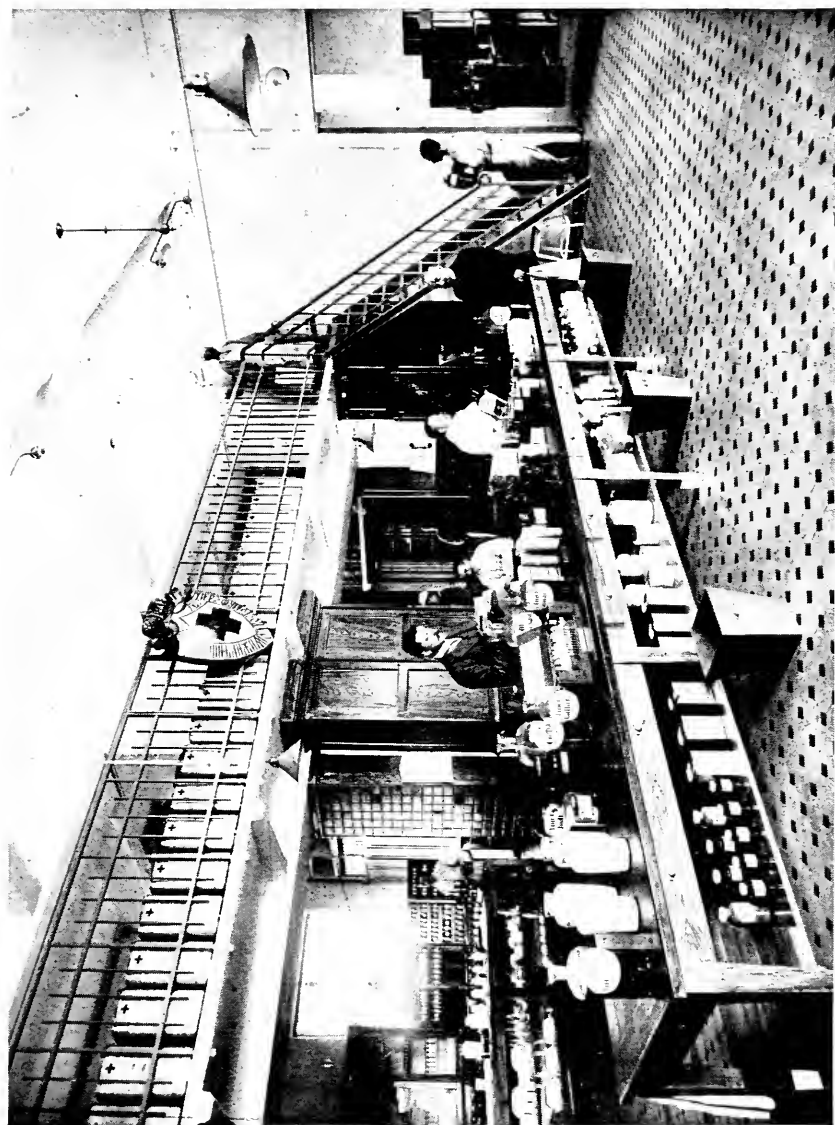
CHAPTER XXIII.

*A MAGNIFICENT INSTITUTION.

“WILL you let me show you some day the Chief Depôt of the Red Cross?” my father’s old friend said to me.

“With pleasure,” I replied, and we arranged at once where and when to meet. The Professor handed

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CENTRAL DEPÔT OF THE RED CROSS INTERIOR IN PETROGRAD.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100

me the latest reports of his pet institution, of which he is the Vice-President. Forced to keep in my bed for a day, I set to and studied this annual report, drawn up by the President of the Council of the Chief Dépôt, B. C. Ordin, Chamberlain of the Emperor. He and Professor von Petersen are the personal links between the Red Cross and the Dépôt, for both these men are members of the principal Committee of the Red Cross, of which the energetic and capable Prince Alexander of Oldenburg, Commander-in-Chief of the *Service Sanitaire* is the President.* He is the man on whose shoulders rests the whole responsibility of the wounded, and the care for the transport of the totally disabled prisoners of war sent back from Germany *via* Sweden.

In studying the report I soon discovered the cause of the astounding efficiency of this institution, a degree of efficiency such as one does not usually associate with Russian undertakings. The secret of the success is the unimpeachable honesty of the *personnel*, and this was plainly stated in so many words.

A few days later I was able to accompany Professor von Petersen to the dépôt. I was very interested to see now for myself what I had read about with so much pleasure. During our drive to the dépôt the Professor gave me a rapid review of the growth and development of this work. He told me that experience gained during the Japanese War had taught the Committee of the Red Cross many lessons. Therefore, on the conclusion of the war, a few members of the Red Cross at once decided to apply these lessons, and

*The Prince, like all the other Grand Dukes, has since resigned his official position, but enjoys the respect of everyone.

formed the Council of the Central Dépôt. They received permission to call in all the medical material over from the war ; this they had very carefully sorted, and all that was good was stored in a block of warehouses which they rented at heavy cost. The accumulated stores were gradually sold off to other institutions, and fresh material bought with the money realised by the sale. The Council also evolved a complete scheme of preparedness ; model types of field hospitals with all the necessary appliances were worked out in theory, catalogued, and then gradually all the necessities were actually prepared. Later the Council bought some acres of ground on the outskirts of Petrograd, where the Chief Dépôt was built, not merely as a warehouse, but as a supply store.

From what my friend related I was prepared to find a good institution, but what I actually saw myself amazed me. Having been introduced to the General Manager, who in spite of his German name is a real Russian, I was told that it was he who had invented many of the most practical appliances. The Professor had told him that as my father's daughter I was sure to be interested in this work. He had good reason for thinking so, for my father's hospital had once upon a time been the model hospital of Petrograd, and it was there that the Professor had been his assistant. He admitted to me with deep gratitude how much he owed to my father's teaching and example. He told me that much of what was best in this place was a direct result of the experience gained in those days long gone by, and during the war of 1877-8, when he had joined the hospital unit at the front of which my father had been the originator.

“ I have never forgotten what your father used to say,” the Professor continued ; “ ‘ I am not only the Director of my Hospital, but also its Chief Dvornik ’ (a kind of handy-man). You see, by this he meant that he aimed at understanding every detail of work. Now this is what I am also trying to do in order to be able to supervise intelligently those who execute my orders.”

I naturally felt very pleased to hear this.

Following the manager, who would have liked best to show me everything, we now walked through the fine buildings, and I felt as if I were inspecting so many factories, laboratories, warehouses, and workshops of clothing and underlinen, of hardware and saddlery. In spacious workrooms I saw close upon two hundred neatly-clad young girls cutting out bandages with the aid of first-class machinery. The bandages were then sterilised, wrapped up and packed. The manager gave me one of the ready bandages as a memento of my visit. He illustrated for me the principle upon which they are worked. A little end of string has to be pulled, and thereby the parchment-like paper cover is torn open and the bandage unfolded, in such a way that the dressing can be applied without having to be touched at all. Thus the dirtiest hand can bandage a wound with safety.

In another department we watched one of the *sanitars** cut out sixty pairs of calico trousers at one turn of the handle of the machine. I walked through storerooms packed up to the very ceiling with blankets, warm vests, and woollen hosiery. “ Let the winter come,” said my guide with a happy smile, “ we do not fear it ;

*A.M.C. men.

we have everything ready." In the saddlery store was every appurtenance for horses and ambulance vans. The Professor informed me that the Council keeps in present use at the front more than eighty-three such ambulance units, each with 100 horses.

I passed through a large storeroom in which every kind of hardware was being kept. I was shown boilers for drinking water, and my guide explained that whereas the foreign stills, of which he showed me some very fine samples, cost £90 each, one invented by the ingenious manager of the *depôt* costs ten guineas only, and does equally good service. I was told that it is chiefly due to these stills that there is so little illness among the Russian troops, who thus not only drink boiled water, but actually distilled water. We walked through showrooms of surgical instruments, and the manager showed me with pride surgical cabinets which can be folded up at a moment's notice, and strapped to the back of a horse to be carried to a safer place. I also saw the folding field medicine chest, equally portable. In fact, everything was so carefully planned out as to require the minimum of labour and space for transport. The Professor told me what the humble-minded manager had left unsaid, namely, that these portable articles were due to his ingenuity.

I soon realised that efficiency, economy of space and time, were not only aimed at, but really secured. Everything is ready to hand in the *depôt*, and I was told that even a telegraphic request for a complete field hospital could be met just as easily and as speedily as an order for so many thousand tabloids, or packages of bandages, hundredweights of rice, or cases of soap—in fact, all these orders are actually executed the same

day as received. The articles, ready for use and packed in cases made on the premises, are promptly placed in trucks which stand outside the warehouse, and are then immediately carried along a private railway line which is connected with the Central Railway system. I was led to understand that the reception of the goods, which come to the dépôt from every part of the Empire, as well as from abroad, is just as expeditious, for the dépôt has its own Custom House, where dues on foreign goods are collected on the spot, and thus delay is avoided.

In one of the yards I observed large numbers of iron casks—"carbolic acid from England," the Professor said. I also saw goods from America, bales of cotton from Japan, etc., etc. What drastic measures are taken if goods prove not to be what they seem is characteristically illustrated by the following story which the Professor told me:—

An offer of so many bales of absorbent cotton wool had been made by Japan and accepted by the Council. These bales were examined on arrival, and a great many were found to contain ordinary cotton wool, upon which an immediate request was made to Japan to send men out at once in order to go through the immense quantity of bales. After the Japanese had separated the absorbent from the non-absorbent cotton wool, the latter was paid for at its real value, that is, at half the price of the absorbent, and since then all Japanese goods delivered to the dépôt leave nothing to be desired.

This Council is sub-divided into Commissions, each devoted to its own speciality, and thus every delivery of goods, whether tapes, drugs, or boilers, is examined

and tested, and if found to be below the standard, is rejected. I was shown some tape being tested. It is owing to this care in the minutiae of detail that field hospitals and other Red Cross institutions never find themselves at a loss, for whatever they receive can be relied upon for quality.

The Professor explained to me that the Red Cross is primarily meant to act as a supplementary agency to the Medical Department of the War Office, upon which, in Russia, the care of the wounded devolves. On what gigantic scale this supplementary work is carried out I had already judged from studying the report. My kind guide informed me that at the present time, however, this depôt was supplying over 2,000 institutions, both in the war zone and at the base, with everything they required—everything in its fullest meaning, even food. The two hospital ships, which have unfortunately both been sunk in the Black Sea by the Turks, had been fitted out by the Council of the depôt ; it had also provided and sent out to the front ninety portable X-ray installations. Many of these are fixed upon motor cars.

In order to lessen the strain on the doctors, a number of non-commissioned officers were trained to become experts in Röntgen photography. Twenty-six hospital trains were equipped, and five factories for the manufacture of artificial ice established. Of course, all this is in addition to the numerous field hospitals. The Council of the depôt also undertook to provide anti-gas outfits, but owing to the lack of chemicals this work had to be carried out under great difficulties. Very soon, however, the obstacles were overcome, and the necessary anti-gas masks or

rather bandages prepared, the demand for which arose until it reached 100,000 per day.

In view of the impossibility of buying certain drugs formerly imported from abroad, the enterprising Committees established on the premises a chemical laboratory for the making of complicated drugs. The machinery for these came from America, and it was fascinating to watch 500 tabloids being turned out in one minute.

Great difficulty was at one time experienced with regard to the supply of such widely different articles as field kitchens, hypodermic syringes and needles, woollen and linen materials and surgical instruments. Nothing daunted, the Council decided to create a supply. Patterns of these articles were sent to specially selected factories, with the happy result that the urgent needs of the hospitals were met, while at the same time home industry was being developed.

The Professor told me with joy and satisfaction that the war had awakened the nation—that, once Slavonic indolence has been shaken off, it is amazing what Russians can and will do. The energetic and intensely practical Teuton, who had hitherto provided them with everything they needed, was now out of the running, and necessity forced the Slav to exert himself. To the surprise of themselves and of everybody else, the Russians had turned out to be equally capable of producing and manufacturing most of the things required. “It is a revelation to the manufacturers what they are able to produce,” added the manager, “for all they supply to our dépôt must be of the best quality.”

It has thus been demonstrated that Russia can do very well without German goods.

I had been impressed by the tidy appearance of the workers, and by the business-like manner in which everything was done by them. The Professor thereupon told me that the staff consists of 475 paid employees, such as clerks, chemists, artisans, bandage makers, labourers, etc. Then there is the Council, consisting of 24 members, honorary workers, who give regularly of their valuable time, thought, and strength towards this great enterprise. They are all busy men, renowned experts in their different professions. The fact that these court officials, army and medical men, scientists, manufacturers and merchants come twice a week to the *depôt* to do their particular work of inspection or examination, proves how faithfully and patriotically they carry out their self-imposed duties towards their wounded fellow-countrymen.

The more I saw of the Chief *Depôt*, and the marvellous order which prevailed in every department, the more I understood my guide's enthusiasm. Indeed, it was a joy to see an institution so efficiently carried on.

The demand upon the help of the Council has steadily increased. Since the beginning of the war, expenditure has risen from seven million roubles to almost forty million roubles during the present year. The Professor told me that it had been suggested that the Red Cross ought to be called "The Ministry of Mercy," for in Russia the great Government Departments, whether Foreign Office, Home Office, or Board of Trade, are all called by the name of Ministries. I like the idea of the Prince of Oldenburg being styled a "Minister

of Mercy." I know he can also be an " Administrator of Wrath."

It had taken quite a long time to inspect this large compound of buildings, and as we returned to the office, I expressed to the manager and to the Vice-President my sincere admiration for all I had seen. " Would you permit me to write an article about the Chief Dépôt ? " I asked ; " for I would like your Allies to know about this work you are doing here."

" Indeed, we should be very pleased if you would do so," was the hearty reply. We then arranged that photographs of the dépôt should be sent to me. A large album was shown me, copies of which were just going to be sent to the young Grand Duchesses, the Tsar's daughters. From this album I made my selection of those photographs which I thought would best convey to foreigners an impression of this magnificent organisation to which Russia's soldiers owe so much.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A MINISTER, APPARENTLY BOTH ABLE AND WILLING TO HELP.

THANKS to the introduction of Mr. Khvostoff, I was received by Mr. Stepanoff, Assistant Minister of the Interior. I was led upstairs by a servant, the doors were flung open and I stepped into a large and lofty

room. Behind the big writing-table stood a tall, severe and very self-conscious looking man, who did not move one step towards me, but let me come right up to him.

He reminded me of a certain doctor in Harley Street, anxious to impress the visitor with his importance.

"I think I am right in assuming that you know the reason for my call," I said.

"No, I do not. All I know is that you desire to see me."

This meant that I had to fight my own battle. The high official invited me to be seated and then I told him that I had been informed that the Administrative Exiles were under his jurisdiction.

"Yes, so they are," he replied laconically.

"Mr. Khvostoff tells me," I went on, "that in order to have their lot alleviated I have to appeal to you."

The important gentleman bowed acquiescence, then pointing to a stack of blue-bound papers, he remarked: "Look at these documents; they are petitions for liberation and I am considering them; in fact, I am always liberating people."

I told him the purpose of my journey and how keenly British people felt about the system of exile. He suddenly unbent and said in a changed tone of voice: "I also am against administrative exile, and think it is high time that the system should be abolished. I am convinced that people would much prefer even four years of imprisonment after due trial, than a lesser number of years' exile by administrative order."

"I think so too," I said. "It is the unfairness of being banished without trial that is so galling. Your Excellency, let us come to the point. What can be done now?"

"Have you any names of individuals you could put before me?" he suggested. "If so, it should be quite an easy and simple matter to get them liberated."

"No," I replied, "for I came to plead against the system and not for individuals; but if you will let me see your list of exiles I shall soon give you names."

He smiled good-naturedly at this ingenious solution of the difficulty. All his stiffness left him and we had a good practical talk. He told me that my request for the liberation of administrative exiles was not so impossible, and he actually volunteered to have their cases revised. It appeared, however, that all those exiles who had been condemned by the Courts—and at present they constitute the majority of exiles and prisoners*—did not come under his department. According to his statistics there were only 670 administrative exiles of the old order left. "Then there are 6,000 more," the Minister added, "but they have been sent into exile since the beginning of the war and for its duration only."

Mr. Stepanoff promised to have a revision of cases made as soon as possible, and then, remembering the parting words of a Russian friend in London: "If you could but get Baboushka Breshkovskaya† free!" I told the Minister about this renowned old lady, so well-known and loved in America. He knew all about

* Over 20,000 such political exiles and prisoners were in Siberia in March, 1917, and all these have been amnestied.

† The "Grandmother" of the Russian Revolution.

her, and promised to look into her case and to have all information ready for me on my return from Kiev.

Then we discussed different aspects of the political situation created by the war, and he frankly admitted that there was at present no revolutionary activity or even agitation. "They are all loyally helping to win the war," he said. I told him of a case of quite unusual patriotism which it had been my privilege to encounter. A political refugee in Paris had preferred to run the risk of being arrested on arrival at the Russian frontier and of being sent at once to Siberia (which he knew would be the sentence passed on him), rather than to live abroad in safety while his country was in need. He believed that his skill as an engineer and builder of aircraft ought to be placed at the service of his Fatherland.

"Then there is Bourtzeff,"* Mr. Stepanoff said. "He came to see me and told me that his work demanded his presence in Petrograd where he was not allowed to live, but here he has been ever since, and I let him remain. What I do consider rather too bad is that his friends are annoyed with me for not permitting him to go to Finland, where he now desires to reside."

Mr. Stepanoff and I parted very amicably. Gone was his stiff formal manner—he actually accompanied me to the door.

*Since the Revolution Mr. Bourtzeff has been in charge of the Police Archives. He was the first revolutionary leader to call upon his comrades to put political party cries aside and help win the war. He was, however, arrested at the Russian frontier, but later on liberated.

CHAPTER XXV.

RESERVISTS IN THE HERMITAGE.

I HAD been visiting the Hermitage, Petrograd's National Gallery, and just as I was on the point of leaving it, my attention was arrested by a group of sturdy, bearded men, who looked absurdly out of place in these elegant halls. Their bewildered faces drew forth my sympathy, and approaching them I said :

" I presume you have been called up to join the Army ? "

" Yes, Baryinia, we are naval reserves from the Olonetz Province, and as we had a free day, we thought we would like to see the museums of Petrograd, only we can't understand anything of all these pictures," the spokesman said ruefully, pointing to a Vandyck. " If only there were written in Russian underneath what it is all about."

" Come on, friend," I said, " I'll explain some of them to you," and accompanied by the grateful naval reserves, some twelve or fourteen men, I picked out pictures of the Holy Scriptures.

The men looked very pleased, but then a happy thought struck me, and leaving Italian and Dutch schools to connoisseurs of art, I showed my companions the beautiful vases of malachite and lapis-lazuli, of grey and reddish marble, which stood in the centre of the rooms. The reservists became quite eager, and, gathering round the green and blue vases, loudly expressed

their admiration. I told them that such green vases were to be seen in palaces of foreign rulers, gifts from Russian emperors.

Next we came to costly tables, inlaid with lovely stones found in the Ural Mountains. It was a pleasure to watch the joy of the men, and their pride in these Russian stones. "To think that such stones are born in Russia," said one of the men, shaking his head to and fro, with love and pride in his voice. They tenderly touched the Russian stone, but their hearts found the greatest delight when I showed them an Italian mosaic table, for the inlaid horses, butterflies, birds and cattle pleased them immensely.

"Now are not these horses just as if alive?"

"Look at these sheep!"

"Do you see these birds?"

As they expressed their pleasure without reserve, a custodian walked up to us, and rather surprised, looked at me and my bearded companions.

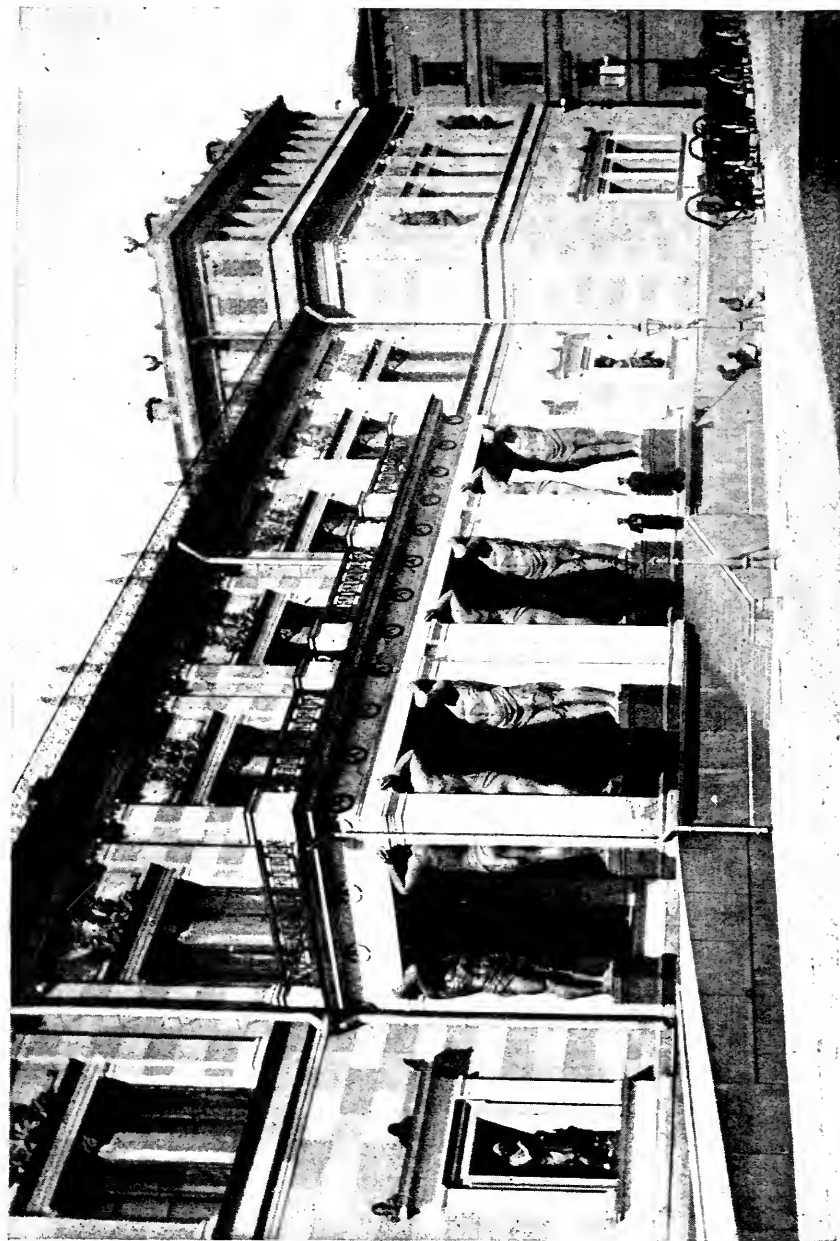
"I am only explaining these tables to the naval reserve men. You see, they were rather at sea in the Gallery." The kindly man immediately grasped the situation, and told me where to find some more such marvels of mosaic.

We had finished our round, and there on the landing of the hall the men saw the more than life-size marble statues of Cain and Abel. My new friends were intensely interested.

"Look at his face!" said one of them, pointing to Cain.

"Does he not look very frightened and horrified?"

"So he does," I replied, "but small wonder," and I pointed to the outstretched figure of the dead Abel.



THE HERMITAGE IN PETROGRAD.



“ Now, is he not just like real ? ” said another one, gently touching the hand of the murdered brother.

It was time for me to leave, and we descended the broad staircase. In parting, I gave the men minute directions how to find the Memorial Church of Alexander II. and the Museum of Alexander III., where Russian art is exhibited.

Before saying farewell, I asked one of the men :

“ How is the harvest ? ” His face was all aglow with joy as he replied :

“ The Good God has given us everything in plenty, hay and corn.” Then his voice grew softer, and he spoke pensively as he added, “ But who will gather it all in ? ”

They surrounded me, and in their simple, warm-hearted manner thanked me for having shown them so many things. I told them the joy was mine, for were they not heroes going to fight for us ?

CHAPTER XXVI.

AMONGST RUSSIAN WORKING PEOPLE ON A SUNDAY.

AN old peasant beside whom I had been sitting, one Sunday afternoon, told me that because the people of Russia no longer spend their money on drink, they are able to buy good food, and that in spite of the tremendous rise in prices.

"We can afford to buy it," he said, "because we have money." An interesting fact this from a politico-economical point of view.

This war has already done, and is still doing, wonderful things for the Russian people, and the first move towards this national metamorphosis was undoubtedly the abolition of vodka. As the result of the sobriety which followed on compulsory abstinence, the people have learnt new values and new standards of living.

Why go in rags, or merely eat bread and onion, when there is money in hand for more?

"How much do you want for your fowl?" an acquaintance of mine asked a peasant woman.

"Twelve roubles (24s.)," was her prompt reply.

"But why so much, my good woman?"

"Well, Baryinia, I can afford to eat fowls myself, so why should I sell it, except at a fancy price?"

This true story is characteristic of the altered economic conditions in Russia. The people, however, have never needed their ready money more than at present, for food is at famine prices in the big towns, and if it were not so desperately sad, it would be comical to have such exorbitant prices asked for everything—prices so utterly out of proportion.

Even the ubiquitous sunflower seed, which the poor love to crack with their teeth, retaining the tiny kernel in their mouth, dexterously spitting out the husk, like monkeys—even this popular luxury has risen from 5 kopeks to twenty kopeks a pound.

One day I watched three prosperous young working-men sitting together on a little river steam-launch, enjoying these sunflower seeds. It was fascinating

to watch them, and I almost imagined myself in the Zoo. The youths were perfectly happy with their seeds, as were some little ragamuffins sitting close by with their cigarettes, and one of these only was the proud possessor of a box of twenty. What would English onlookers have thought of this? No one, however, took any notice whatever of such a common occurrence as little boys smoking.

They were an interesting lot, my fellow-passengers on the little launch which runs across the Neva, then along the Fontanka on to Kalinkin.

It was Sunday afternoon and everyone was in his best. The artisans' wives had rich black lace silk shawls, which cost from thirty to forty shillings each, on their heads; their daughters, however, wore smart hats. There were young workmen in brand new sateen shirts, one wore a shirt of salmon pink, girded with a red cord from which dangled a green tassel to match his cap. Another was dressed in brown, with a broad green belt—then I saw one in pale blue and another one in heliotrope. How tame and colourless in contrast is the Sunday best of the factory-hand of Western Europe.

It is these touches of bright colour in the shirts of men and boys which give relief to the otherwise drab clothing of the urban population of the poorer districts. In the country it is the brilliant scarlet skirts and headkerchiefs of the women at work in the field that convey the impression of bright patches of poppies in the corn.

The little launch got more and more crowded as time went on, with lovers, family parties and children. At one of the landing places, a quaint elderly gentleman,

in spotlessly clean, but shabby clothes, stepped into the boat, and as he pushed his way in, he called out in a loud voice, "His Majesty the Tsar in person." The poor old thing sat down in the middle seat, and screwing his face into queer contortions, rubbed his fine, white scholarly hands together continuously. Once more he loudly proclaimed the fact that he was the Tsar, but nobody laughed. A handsome young labourer only gave me a knowing smile, and a vendor of cucumbers whispered to me, "He is not quite right in his head." A little girl of some two years, sitting in her mother's lap, suddenly began to rub her little hands vigorously together. When her father asked her whom she had seen do that, she pointed straight at the poor old lunatic, but her father, an ordinary working man, rebuked her for this.

What good thoughtful faces these men had, and what refined hands—hands which are commonly called "intellectual."

I asked one of the women where all the people were going to. "Some to the church of the Saviour, others to the hospital to visit relations and friends," but she herself was going to the Church to worship, she told me.

I thoroughly enjoyed my hour and a half in the little steamer, for apart from the human element, we passed many interesting buildings. I noticed also many large barges full of birch logs, the fuel of Northern Russia, which one is, however, hardly able to procure in Petrograd, though great stacks of this wood are to be seen piled up on barges along the side of the quays of all the branches of the Neva and of the many canals.

“Rings” and “corners” are at present the curse of Russia, and no wonder that the people murmur, and even publicly talk of lynching, after the war, the speculators who are creating famine prices in order to enrich themselves. I could not but sympathise with this demand for summary justice; however, a high official told me that there was not enough rope to go round for all those who deserved to be hanged.

Who is to blame for the state of affairs?

I grew weary of hearing of nothing but prices in tram-car and private houses, and I had to forbid the old faithful servant, when waiting on me at table, to quote the price of everything I ate, for it made me feel as if I were swallowing money.

Fortunately for me my fellow-passengers in the launch were not talkative, and so on this occasion I was spared the perpetual topic of famine prices, or were they so well off that they could ignore them? Never before has the Russian factory hand earned so much money as now, and war pay has made him affluent.

Most of these men and women were out to enjoy themselves, which they did decently and quietly. While some were pre-occupied with their own thoughts—for were they not going to see their loved ones in hospital?—those who were bound for the church were solemnising their thoughts for worship.

CHAPTER XXVII.

PROHIBITION.

"THIS shop is closed"—I read this notice in many windows in Petrograd.

"Why is that restaurant closed?" I asked my cousin, pointing to a well-known small but select restaurant.

"That restaurant there had to close," he remarked, "because it used to make its profits on wines and spirits, and since the prohibition of the sale of alcohol and spirits, many restaurants have had to shut down. Breweries also are not working at present."

"Do the shareholders get compensation?" I asked a gentleman, who told me that his distillery had been forced to stop working.

"None whatever," he replied.

"What do you do about it?"

"Nothing, for although we are the losers by these drastic measures, the nation is the gainer."

One evening I was dining at one of the smartest restaurants of Petrograd. All the small tables in the garden were occupied by well-dressed ladies and men in uniform. Very few were in civilian clothing. My host ordered a choice dinner—caviare and other luxuries were served—but no wines. Everybody drank kvass, a delicious non-alcoholic national beverage. We drank this frothy "sucharny" kvass out of fine large glasses, and I am sure all these smart people thoroughly enjoyed the cooling draught. For me this was a

new experience—a Russian teetotal dinner party—but my friends had evidently become so accustomed to it that no comment even was made as to the absence of wine.

“You cannot buy any Eau de Cologne without a doctor’s prescription,” my friend said to me one day when I had expressed my intention of doing so.

“But why not?” was my astonished retort.

“For the simple reason that people have taken to drinking Eau de Cologne, and when they cannot get that, many drink methylated spirits.”

We had been talking about the abolition of alcohol and of the various tricks people were having recourse to in order to satisfy their craving for it, and a doctor friend then told me of the following incident.

One night he was sent for to go to a home for Polish refugees. He found it furnished with a minimum of necessities. The patient was seriously ill.

“Have you a hot bottle you can give her?” he asked the matron.

“No, we do not go in for such luxuries.”

“Then, please, get me some flannel and we will make her a hot fomentation.”

“I am sorry, but we have no flannel.”

“Then at least give her at once a drop of brandy.”

“Brandy!” exclaimed the matron, her eyes brightening with a sudden hope, “we have none, but please, doctor, prescribe plenty of brandy and wine and then we will be able to get it.”

Needless to say the doctor did nothing of the kind; but what he did, was to provide that home with the necessities required for invalids.

Nearly every day I passed one of the shops which had a notice across its window proclaiming the fact that the business was closed. The window was on a level with the pavement, and in the basement I observed a man sitting at a table littered with papers. At other times I saw him stooping over large account books and wondered was he making up bills for imaginary customers, or, was he merely studying old bills? He always wore the same contented expression. The enforced idleness did not appear to weigh heavily upon him, but perhaps he was not the owner who was losing financially by the closing of the business, but merely a clerk, paid to keep the shop aired for after the war—when once again wines will be in demand.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE FESTIVAL OF THE ST. GEORGE'S CAVALIERS.

TRULY magnificent specimens of men are the Cavaliers of the Order of St. George, the V.C.'s of the Russian army. I had the privilege of seeing hundreds of them, both officers and men, for July 3rd was kept as their day, and in the gaily decorated grounds of the People's Palace at Petrograd, I spent some hours watching thousands of people holiday-making in honour of these Cavaliers. All the takings of the day at this and at four other public parks were dedicated to the orphans

and widows of the fallen heroes, bearers of the St. George's Cross.

Brilliant sunshine gave to this gathering of people that touch of brightness which holiday-making requires. The grounds of the People's Palace were hung with flags, many of them orange and black, the colours of the ribbon of St. George, while large St. George's crosses and St. George's medals were used as decorations. A well-clad, orderly crowd of working people, with just a sprinkling of officers, thronged the large grounds.

Among the heroes were many invalids, many maimed, legless, armless, or blind—every group in charge of their nurse. Some of the men wore four crosses and as many medals, the most a man can get. Both they and their more fortunate comrades, the unwounded St. George's Cavaliers, struck me as wonderfully fine men. There was a marked similarity in figure and face, as if bravery and heroism were natural to a certain type of man.

I sat on a bench near an old peasant who talked of the war, and a young girl who regretted her inability, on account of the crowd, to catch a sight of the variety show then taking place in the open-air theatre.

A little later, a one-legged cavalier took a seat near me. He looked so forlorn that I ventured to speak to him, and when I heard that for some unknown reasons the St. George's Cavaliers from his hospital had not been taken to any of the parks, and that he had come out all by himself, I waived convention and invited him to have some tea with me. This he accepted, whereupon we moved to the open-air restaurant, where innumerable people were sitting

round little tables, all drinking tea. There was no empty table, but I found two vacant places at one occupied by a couple of smart non-commissioned officers of the Preobrajenski Regiment, both wearing the St. George's Cross on their uniform.

I asked their permission to sit down, which, of course, was politely granted, and thus I partook of my afternoon tea in the company of three Cavaliers.

After waiting a long time, my order for tea was executed, and what eventually arrived was as un-English a tea as possible—namely, a small empty teapot, another huge one full of boiling water, four lumps of sugar, some slices of lemon, and a pinch of tea wrapped up in paper. Plumping this down before me, the waitress remarked in a matter-of-fact voice, "There, make your own tea." Which I did.

But what about cups? On the little table stood two empty glasses, into which the waitress had poured some hot water from the big pot. Evidently each customer was expected to wash his own glass. My soldier-visitor and I managed three glasses each of the delicious amber-coloured beverage, flavoured with lemon, and thoroughly enjoyed the hot cakes—like doughnuts, but filled with rice. As these cakes were very greasy they were served with a tissue-paper serviette.

When the waitress again came for payment, my soldier offered to pay his share, but I reminded him that it was I who had invited him, and told him that the honour had been mine.

The crowd now increased rapidly, and all around stood groups of splendid cavaliers. As I watched the orderly, sober crowd of merry-makers, I thought

how different it was from the holiday-making of years ago. And again and again the words shaped themselves in my mind—"a sober people." Truly a wonderful sight, a crowd of thousands of people—later in the Petrovski Park, I was among ten thousand people—and all quiet, orderly and sober. Not one drunken man or woman did I see, and the same cause which made them sober—the abolition of vodka—made this sober people prosperous-looking and well clad.

CHAPTER XXIX.

TRUE HUMANITY.

HE was a big, fair-haired fellow, with a generous heart and a keen sense of humour. With a twinkle in his eye, he very simply told me some incidents from his life as a prisoner of war in Germany.

"Although I was a non-commissioned officer and therefore had no need to go out and work, I offered to do so when volunteers were asked for. When I presented myself to go as a labourer to some peasants, the Commandant of the lager said to me, 'Sie nix nach Russland laufen?' "

For my benefit he translated the question: "You will not escape to Russia?"

"'Nein, nix Russland laufen,' I replied, but of course I went to work only with that hope and intention. I was sent to an old couple where I lived really well,"

and then interrupting himself with a merry laugh, he said to me : " but I must admit I didn't do much work, and whenever the old peasant asked me when the dog's kennel which I had promised to make would be ready, I said always, ' To-morrow.' Yet in spite of this they fed me with their best and treated me kindly. You see, the old man had fought against the Germans in 1870 and had been shut up in Metz, and he didn't love the Germans overmuch even now. Several of my comrades were working some miles away from where I was, for these ' Germantzi ' would not let us be together in case we might plan to escape. We had, however, been promised that we could all meet occasionally on Sundays. As no prisoner of war may walk alone, my old man promised to take me to a certain village where I hoped to meet my comrades. There was no one on the heath which we had to cross, and as we walked along, I suddenly looked at the old peasant beside me, and the thought struck me : ' Now, who can hinder my making an end of him, and going off into liberty ? ' But then I said to myself : ' What, kill an old man ? No, never ! '

" When I had come to this conclusion, I said to my guard, who was carrying a loaded gun, ' If I try to run away and escape, will you shoot me ? '

" The old man looked steadily at me for a moment, then turning his head away, he said quietly :

" ' No, my son, too, is a prisoner. ' "

CHAPTER XXX.

THE COMMON OCCURRENCE OF A CHANGE OF MINISTERS.

"HAVE you heard that there is to be a change of Ministers? Stuermer is going to be Foreign Minister in place of Sazonoff; Khvostoff is taking Stuermer's place as Minister of the Interior, and Makaroff will be Minister of Justice," said one the Assistant Ministers with whom I was lunching.

"And what about you?" I asked. He laughed and spoke of retiring from office.

In the evening my cousin said to me: "Did you read in the papers that the Ministers were going to discuss the whole principle of exile at their Council? Now, of course, owing to this change of Ministers, the Council will not be held."

A few days later I was informed that the new Minister of Justice was expecting a visit from me. It seemed useless to go to him, for had not his predecessor categorically refused to do anything for the exiles under his jurisdiction? Still, I had no right to risk losing an opportunity—so I went.

I had been warned that I might have to wait, as the new Minister was holding an official reception. I found myself in the waiting-room, among a number of gentlemen all in full uniform, and awaiting their turn to pay their respects to the new man in power. Most of them looked uncomfortable in their stiff

gold-embroidered gala uniforms, with a broad red ribbon across the chest. One or two looked decidedly nervous.

In the next room, a much larger one, several other important personages, in the full glory of ribbons and decorations, were excitedly walking up and down. I heard one of the officials, evidently some secretary, whisper to a man sitting at a table, with a large book in front of him, "Five gentlemen and then the lady." I was therefore greatly surprised to find that when the door opened to let a Senator out, I was asked to step in.

A tall man with a long beard, looking very much like a benevolent schoolmaster, rose to greet me. I expressed my thanks at being received, and offered congratulations on his new appointment. Mr. Makaroff looked decidedly pleased, and said: "Thank you for your kind congratulations, but you see it is nothing new to me to be a Minister. I have already once filled the position of Minister of the Interior, and for me power has lost its charm."

"Nevertheless, power is a wonderful thing," I replied. "It brings with it such great opportunities, and I hope you will at once use it to help the exiles." He thereupon told me that he was much interested in what he deigned to call my business, and also that, in the course of his career, he had had frequent occasion to deal with political prisoners and exiles.

Then, looking at me rather seriously, he said, "No exile condemned by the Courts can be released without the signature of His Majesty. The pardon must come from him."

I showed him the document concerning the brave old lady, Mme. Breshko-Breshkovskaya* ; for, true to his promise, Mr. Stepanoff had prepared for me an abstract of her case, in which it was stated that she had tried to escape, had been caught and condemned, and therefore came under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Makaroff carefully looked through the report. "Of course, it is quite a simple matter to get her released," he said, "only first her friends must send in a petition, and then she has to write herself. You see it has happened several times that friends have pleaded for the release of a prisoner,† and that after His Majesty has granted it, the individual in question has refused to accept his act of grace. The Emperor cannot be exposed to such rebuffs," the Minister said emphatically, "hence it is imperative for the party concerned to express regret for the past, and to be willing to ask for clemency."

"That Madame Breshkovskaya will never do," I replied. "She will never believe that she has anything to repent of, and she is far too true to her convictions to change them. If that is the only way to get her free, she will prefer to remain in Siberia. I will do my best to explain how matters stand to her friends in England and America."

Towards the close of the interview, Mr. Makaroff

*Mme. Breshko-Breshkovskaya, "the Grandmother of the Russian Revolution," as she is called, was one of the first exiles to return to Petrograd. She is in favour of continuing the war until Germany is defeated.

†It is against the ethics of Political Exiles and prisoners to ask or let anyone else ask for clemency.

said, "There are very many reasons against the amnesty for which you are pleading, but also very many reasons for it, and I do not want to imply in the least that the *cons* outweigh the *pros*." His remarks made me very happy, and I told him so.

"The best thing for me to do is to see what categories could be suggested to His Majesty for an amnesty," he added. "I will have it put in hand at once, only please believe me, that it is far too big a matter to be arranged within a few days."

We agreed that I should come and see him again. As I left the building I walked on air, for what his predecessor had flatly refused, Makaroff intended doing. So an amnesty was not an impossible thing after all, and the change of Ministers was benefiting those whose cause I had come to plead.

I think my face must have shown something of the hope and joy I felt.

CHAPTER XXXI.

RUSSIAN BIRCHES.

NOWHERE in the world are there such beautiful birches as in Russia, and nowhere in Russia are there such beautiful birches, in my opinion at least, as in the park of Levashovo.

I am lying under one of these white-stemmed giants and rejoicing in the graceful trees all around me. It



BIRCHES.

[By A. T. Koundji.

is a lovely summer's day. The air is scented, and, stretched out on fresh hay, I am listening to the chirping of birds, the fine, crackling sound made by the squirrels, the monotonous song of the mosquitoes, and the gentle whisper of the birch leaves. The sky is cloudless, and against the blue background gigantic birches are standing out in all their grace and softness of form, while the leaves of isolated branches appear like showers of green drops arrested in mid-air.

It is fascinating to watch the effect of the breeze which now and then springs up, touching merely the tops and upper branches of the birches. It produces a ripple, which spreads from tree to tree, and while the boughs of those nearest to me have again become motionless, the leaves of the further ones are still moving. The leaves seem to be trembling under the kiss of Zephyr, and the gentle sound of rustling, first faint, then increasing in sound, and finally dying away. Here and there stand majestic fir trees, tall and stately, their dark branches serving as a contrast to the silvery white stems and pale green leaves of the birches.

Nature intended these northern trees to grow to such giants as those on which the park of Levashovo prides itself. It is, however, man's hand which has enabled them to develop to such perfect proportions. In the forest the individual tree cannot do so, because the trees stand in close masses, while in this park there is breathing and expanding space provided by judicious clearing.

As I lie and look about me, my attention is arrested by a group of birches of perfect beauty, one of them,

which consists of three trunks out of one root, has a kind of matronly look, while not far from it stands a tall, slender birch—a graceful maiden. To lie in the shadow of the big branches of the fir tree, and just to watch Nature, to listen to its manifold sounds, which can be heard only because all is so still, is rest and delight.

My eye does not behold merely the beauty of the tall trees, but gazes upon the small things of the ground, for although the grass has been mown, many a blue harebell has escaped the scythe, as have also some fine grasses, which are glistening like burnished bronze against the dark background of the fir trees standing in the shade.

Oh, the beauty of the Russian forest ; so full of mystery, so rich in vegetation, in berries and fungi, in flower and moss, so vast and endless, but also, alas ! so full of rotting tree-trunks, broken branches and dead brushwood, and of wild undergrowth. The Russian forest is to me a symbol of the Russian nation, as full of potentiality, of riches and beauty, but just as wild and crowded, and one longs for a master-forester to come who will turn the wilderness of a primæval forest into a beautiful park, like the one I am in at present. For, after all, this park is merely a forest, judiciously and purposefully cleared. The dead branches, the fallen trunks, the dead brushwood, all are cleared away, but there is nothing artificial about it—just Russian nature, pure and unmitigated, but liberated from encumbrances and from all that chokes life. That is just what the nation also requires—liberty to develop, the chance for every individual to grow to fulness and maturity.

Russian forests are as different from German forests as nature is from artifice. In spite of the beauty of individual trees, German forests irritate one by their regularity of line, by their rigid symmetry. There is no fear of this ever happening in Russian forests. Even if order were to come to them in the way of judicious forestry, they would still retain the charm of spontaneity and the mystery of unexplored thickets. Indeed, the park of Levashovo is a symbol of what the development of Russian life should be.

CHAPTER XXXII.

SOME TRAVELLING EXPERIENCES.

No greater contrast can be imagined than that between English and Russian railway stations. Here in England people just pass through, but there in my Homeland people seem at present to be almost living on the stations. I am not speaking of the refugees, many of whom have had to spend weeks and even months there—I mean just the ordinary traveller.

We had come to the Nicolai Station in Petrograd, intending to buy a ticket for the next day. I had been told at the Central Bureau on the Nevsky that all the tickets they had to dispose of had been sold out, neither had the International Sleeping Car Company any left. Our last chance was to go to the railway

station itself. A long queue of people was standing before the booking-office window. I took my place, and a few minutes later the crowd behind me had greatly increased.

"Have you booked your ticket in advance?" I was asked by the man who stood in front of me, "as otherwise it is perfectly useless your standing here."

I stepped out of the queue, and went up to a policeman. "What should I do in order to get a ticket?" I enquired.

"Go upstairs to the Military Commandant, perhaps he may be able to oblige you."

We soon found the room of this omnipotent official, and my cousin, who is always exceedingly polite, told him in his most suave manner that I had come from England, that I was travelling on a special mission, and that it was quite imperative for me to start the next day.

A lady from England! The Commandant became all smiles. "Oh, yes, I can give her a place on an officer's ticket. Pray come to-morrow and just ask for it as usual at the booking-office."

The Anglo-Russian Alliance had procured me a seat—the best there was left, but what a best! The next day I received the promised ticket—second class. I found myself crushed in, one of six in a compartment; there were three rows of beds on each side, one above the other.

The idea of having to spend a night with five men, women and children in an ordinary small compartment with closed windows, and that in June, was too much for me. Having walked along the passage, I found an empty seat in a first class compartment, where I sat

down, awaiting the arrival of the conductor. That official proved very sympathetic, and suggested that if only I would sit in my second class compartment until the inspector had passed, I was quite free to occupy the first class seat without paying the difference. Evidently it was a good tip he was hoping for. I probably disappointed him by expressing my intention of remaining in the first class seat, and paying the difference immediately. This seemed to him a senseless waste of money.

My travelling companion explained to me the system of the "Platzkart," and said that ours was a supplementary carriage, which had been added owing to the crush, and so the Platzkart system did not apply, otherwise there would be only four people travelling in a second class compartment.

"Why do they still use this German word?" I wondered; "surely the Russian word for sleeping place would be much more to the point?"

I had been warned in Petrograd that it was difficult to secure sleeping car accommodation in Moscow; I tried my luck, but it seemed almost hopeless. A friend, however, promised to do his best for me.

On arrival at the station, his servant handed me the precious Platzkart. "It cost five roubles to put your name down for the 'Platzkart,'" he said. Imagine having to pay ten shillings for the mere chance of getting a ticket! "Never mind," I said to myself, "at least I have secured a place, and a lower one into the bargain."

Disappointment awaited me, for the conductor informed me that the lower place had also been sold to a gentleman.

What was I to do? The stationmaster suggested waiting for another train, but fortunately the gentleman turned out to be amiable, and willing to let me have the place I coveted. Such things as ladies' compartments are a rare luxury under war conditions in Russia. You are nowadays grateful to get a seat at all, and many people have to stand through the whole night, and I have even known of cases where people travelled on the roofs of railway carriages, and had been grateful for that.

Evidently the railway companies argue in the same way as did the conductor on the Finnish railway, who replied to my acquaintance's complaint of lack of accommodation, "There is sufficient accommodation, but there are too many passengers."

At times there are even passengers who travel without tickets, "hares" they are called, and one day, returning from the dining-car to my carriage, I came across some individuals of this curious species—three soldiers standing close together in the little corridor.

"Why don't you go into the compartment and sit down?" I remarked. They cast an enquiring glance at me, as if to take my measure, and evidently satisfied with what they found, gave me a knowing wink, and whispered:

"We have no right at all in this train. We are hoping not to be seen by the conductor. We have received a few days' leave, and our town is not far from here, but the slow train by which we soldiers ought to travel starts many hours later, and takes a much longer time on the journey."

"If the conductor catches you, call me and I'll

make it all right for you," I said, but evidently he proved to be human, for my purse was not called upon to overcome legal restrictions.

At one station I had to wait three hours for my train. I spent them in watching the people who were waiting in the waiting-rooms—waiting indeed. Never before had I been so conscious of the infinite capacity for waiting there is in the Russian people, until I had to spend hours and hours at railway stations. Human life in all its phases, war with all its sorrows, these I found in the waiting-rooms. In those of the first class were always crowds of officers, who passed through them or sat at the long tables drinking tea. There, too, sat whole families, evidently uprooted by the war. One mother especially attracted my attention and excited my sympathy. Her face bore an expression of utterly hopeless weariness. Beside her was an equally weary lad of about fourteen, and as he leant against his mother's shoulder, both with eyes shut, they could have sat as models for a picture called "Hopelessness." It was unendurable to see her thus, and sitting down beside her, I said a few words of sympathy.

No wonder she looked so hopeless. The family were refugees from Poland. For a year they had lived in Mogilev, where the mother had found occupation as secretary to the Polish Relief Committee, thereby providing an income for the family. Suddenly, however, the order had come for them to remove to Tambov, and the reason for this "injustice," as she rightly called it, was that the parents were unable to tell of the whereabouts of the eldest boy, who had run away when a lad of fourteen, and from whom they had had

no news for the last four years. The second son had just been taken into the army. "The Government is quite willing to take him away from us into the army, but they drive us out, as if it were our guilt that our eldest cannot be found."

I watched the family as they left the waiting-room, father, mother, three sons and a girl, each carrying heavy bundles, and following the porter who had shouldered a big basket—all the goods they possessed. The mother turned to me and said :

"This is how we have to go, and we have no income, no money, and no prospect of earning any."

I shall never forget the look of despair in that woman's face.

All the people in the first and second class seemed to me a grey mass of tired people ; so I walked into the third class waiting-room, which I found everywhere intensely interesting. *There* are the soldiers, our brave men. *There* are the *soldatki*, the soldiers' wives, either going to see their husbands or coming away from them. *There* are peasants and labourers travelling in search of work, whole family groups sitting on the floor, perfectly content, and evidently absolutely indifferent to dirt and dust.

There on the ground, turned on her side, I saw a young peasant woman, lying sound asleep—her baby crawling over her, tumbling down, creeping up again, only to slip back. She slept on, oblivious of the fact that on a bench close to her, her two older children, dots of three and four, were doing their best to break their necks by hanging head downwards.

It struck me many a time when watching these third class railway waiting-rooms, how perfectly

wonderful childhood is in its utter unconsciousness of its surrounding. The little Russian children would toddle among the soldiers squatted on the floor, quite lively and happy—although the grown-ups seemed so serious, and many sad. War, this war, is leaving its mark on them all, but the children, they coo and laugh, and call forth smiles by their quaint antics.

Oh, the crowds in the Russian railway stations, and the endless queues of people waiting to buy their tickets! I have seen them squat on the ground, for human legs cannot endure such hours and hours of standing, and perhaps by the time it is the turn for the last persons to come up, the train has already left. I never saw any disorder, nobody seemed to try to get the better of his neighbour, and the gendarmes are there more in the capacity of walking enquiry bureaux than to keep order. It is the war which causes this congested traffic—soldiers everywhere, wives and sweethearts travelling to see their dear ones.

I shall never forget the face of one particular woman, she looked so white, so weary and unutterably sad. My sister and I had been speaking in English, when suddenly turning to us, she remarked :

“ I am English, only I do not speak the language. Still, it makes me happy to hear the language my parents used.” She told us her story. Born in Russia of English parents, she had married a Russian. She had never been to England, though all her people were now there, and two of her brothers were serving in the British army. She had been informed by telegram that her husband was seriously wounded, and she was now on her way to the Bukovina.

"I am quite sure I shall not find him alive." She reiterated these words in hopeless monotony.

"Why don't you wire to enquire?" we asked.

"It's no use. Telegrams take such a long time to go. No, I had better go on and find out."

We were sorry for her, for she seemed like somebody without roots—an Englishwoman who did not even speak the language of her own people, and who frankly admitted feeling out of sympathy with the milieu into which she had married.

"Some day I want to visit England," she said with a feeble smile. "I am told that life there is very happy."

"It is very comfortable," I replied.

On another occasion my *vis-a-vis* was a very intelligent young woman, who began talking to me about what her heart was full of, namely, education.

"It is the first time, I think, that education has had a chance in Russia," she said. "Count Ignatiev, the new Minister of Education, is the best man we have ever had."

"What about the hosts of officials under him?" I remarked. "Have they not carried out the reactionary policy of his predecessors for so many years?"

"They will soon change their tune, and do as he wishes," she replied. "Imagine what a wonderful thing for Russia to have teachers' and parents' conferences! We teachers feel so happy, elated and hopeful. There is much which wants altering in our educational system, but I trust we shall never copy German methods. You are, of course, aware that I, like other students of education," she went on to

say, "have studied German books and have read German educational journals, but when I saw the real article in Germany, and the deadening influence these ideas have on the pupils, I said, 'God save us!'"

It was very interesting to hear her speak, and if Russia has many such keen teachers there is a chance for the future generation to be better educated. The weakness of the Russian system lies in the fact that while Russians have received mental culture, real character building has been neglected. The new ideal of the Russian teachers is a blending of learning and discipline.

I remarked to this eager young woman on the discomfort of travelling, many people having to stand close to us. "Yes, is it not awful? You see, it is holiday time, and one goes to see one's friends and relations. All Russia is on the move," she said, laughing. And I think she is right, and this in more than one sense.

There is a movement in the nation, a stirring in the air, it is as though life were awakening after a long winter frost. Like a storm the war is sweeping over the land, but in spite of all its horrors it is coming as a liberator, just as the spring storms which break the ice. For Russia, too, the spring is coming. The spring storm may break and uproot many an old tree, but the young ones will shoot up all the stronger and better, for there will be a greater chance for them to develop their latent strength—to grow, blossom and bring forth fruit.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

DELIGHT TO THE EYES.

ONE morning, quite early, standing at the open window of the corridor, our train gliding along smoothly through endless fields of ripened corn, I was enjoying the quiet expansive beauty of the landscape. Before me, spread out like a rich Persian carpet—as soft in colour, and looking almost as soft in texture—lay spacious fields of creamy-pink buckwheat, intersected by large squares and patches of golden corn. Suddenly, my glance was arrested by a flash of light at one point of the picture—the rays of the sun had caught the steel blade of a scythe. There, all unconscious that he supplied the vital part of a glorious panorama, walking through the corn was a peasant, carrying over his shoulder his scythe, from which sparkled and radiated light.

What a symbol of Russia's wealth, her corn and her man-power.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

KIEV.

LATE one Sunday night I received a telegram with the welcome news that the Empress Dowager would receive me in Kiev. So great, however, was the overcrowding that the first possible chance for securing a "sleeper"

was on Thursday. I telegraphed to the Lady-in-Waiting that owing to the impossibility of taking an earlier train I would arrive on Saturday morning.

Kiev! Mother of Russian cities! At last I was to see with my own eyes this ancient and famous historic town, about which I had read and written so much—Kiev! where Askold and Dir, the bold Vikings, had settled, till Oleg the Wise took it from them by guile. From Kiev, Oleg had gone down to Byzantium to conquer the proud Queen of the Bosphorus, and from Kiev Olga had held sway over the Russian lands. It was in this city that Vladimir, "Fair Sun," held his court, and here he was joined by the bold knights of his round table. Around this merry, generous prince, with Kiev as his seat, cycles of heroic legend have been woven. To Kiev came Christianity, with all the pomp and glamour of Byzantium, and during the reign of Yaroslav the Wise, to Kiev had flocked foreign visitors—princes, warriors and merchants.

I looked, and there was Kiev standing out against the blue background of a cloudless sky. Spellbound, I gazed upon the beautiful panorama displayed before my eyes.

There, high on the steep banks of the River Dnieper, rising out of luscious verdure of trees, cupolas of churches sparkled with gold and shone radiant in colour. Far below the city the broad river flowed along, and in the foreground of this exquisite *ensemble* of colour and form, quiet pools showed themselves here and there, their surface thick with water-lilies, like big stars fallen from the sky.

CHAPTER XXXV.

IN KIEV AND MOGILEV.

A FEW minutes after arriving at the Palace I was received by the Empress Dowager. Her Majesty had already sent down three times to enquire whether I had arrived, so I had to go into her presence just as I was—in hat and travelling dress.

She listened with the greatest sympathy to all I had to say, and I spoke with perfect confidence and trust, for Her Majesty had helped me twice before in matters concerning exiles. In this instance she promised to do her best to enable me to see her son. There was one difficulty, however, which she pointed out regretfully, namely: that the Emperor had made it a rule not to receive lady visitors at headquarters. Nevertheless, she spontaneously offered to write a letter to him, which I was to deliver by hand.

I also reported to her the plight of the brave men who had escaped from captivity in Germany and described the utter lack of organisation which prevailed. The same side of it struck her as had struck me when I heard the men vent their grievances, namely, that it was a positive danger to the State.

I think it was here, in the Palace of Kiev, that I heard the most pronounced anti-German sentiments. No one could accuse the entourage of the Empress Dowager of pro-German sympathies.

Late in the afternoon of the next day I arrived at the railway station of Mogilev; the town itself

was some three miles distant. I handed to the Commandant in charge of the railway station a slip of paper from the Secretary of the Empress Dowager requesting him to render me every assistance. The perplexity of the official was most amusing to witness. Here was something quite unforeseen—a lady—a British subject—who produces a letter addressed merely to “His Majesty,” and calmly asks him to ring up and ask for a motor to be sent for her to take her to the Emperor’s quarters.

Obediently, the Commandant rang up the Lord Chamberlain and was told in reply that everyone was out, but that the message would be passed on.

At seven o’clock the Chamberlain appeared in person to see me. His face was a study—here was a case for which there was no precedent. The Prince was evidently very anxious to please the Empress Dowager through me, but—and there was a very big but—“His Majesty does not receive ladies at headquarters.”

Finally, he asked me if I would entrust him with the letter, adding, “If you will tell me everything you wish to lay before His Majesty, I promise faithfully to deliver your message and to see that you get a reply. You can go on now to Petrograd and from there send a written statement direct to the Emperor.”

The Prince was in a dire dilemma, but I solved the difficulty by not persisting in my demand for a personal interview, for I honoured the principle. “But I do hope that all his gentlemen are acting on the same principle,” I added somewhat maliciously.

“I will write the letter here,” I continued, “and I ask you kindly to hand it and the illuminated text to His Majesty.” This he promised to do.

The Prince expressed great regret at not being able to offer me hospitality, but invited me to sleep in a coupé of the sleeping car which stood in the siding, and was used by Ministers and other visitors to headquarters,* and which was commonly called "the staff car." Before the Chamberlain left, he instructed the Commandant to supply me with writing materials and to see that I had all I required.

My sense of humour was intensely tickled, for I am sure that never before had a personal letter to the Tsar been written with such a bad pen and such terrible ink, and on the official paper of the station. There, in the little office I sat, and, after asking God for guidance, wrote a long letter to the man who wielded such power. I did not mince matters; I told him that he had power and that according to Holy Scripture, "the decisive word is on the lips of the Tsar" (the word used for "King" in the Russian translation). I also quoted General Khabaloff's statement: "The Emperor's word is law." I told him of the illuminated text which I had prepared for him—a selection of texts on the ruler's power, on the suffering of the exiles, who were like the people mentioned in Isaiah 59, verses 8 and 14, and those words in Proverbs, "If a man's way pleases the Lord he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him"—"God cannot bless Russia while unrighteousness flourishes," I wrote, and concluded with the bold advice: "You have power, use it, and you will be blessed and beloved."

*Hotels in Mogilev were not very nice to stay in. "You could not possibly travel in a sleeping car after having slept in one of the hotels," the man in charge of the "staff car" told me afterwards.

Потоки водъ,
Сердце Царя
 въ рукѣ Господа.***

Псалтирь 21 1

Царскій гнѣвъ вѣстникъ смерти.

Псалтирь 18 14

Мы ожидаемъ свѣта, но вотъ тьма;
 ждемъ сіянiя, но ходимъ во мракѣ:....
 Ожидаемъ правосудiя, и нѣтъ его,—
 спасенiя, но оно далеко отъ насъ;

Исаия 59 11

Въ устахъ Царя
 слово рѣшительное,
Свѣтлое Лице Царя
 жизнь, *↓*↓*↓*↓*↓*↓*↓*↓*↓*

Псалтирь 16 15

Милосердiемъ и правдою очища-
 ется грѣхъ, . . .

Псалтирь 18 2

Когда Господу угодны пути
 человѣка, Онъ примиряетъ съ
 нимъ даже враговъ его.

Псалтирь 16 7

Господи направляй
 сердце Царя!

VERBAL TRANSLATION OF THE ILLUMINATED TEXT.

(In the Russian Bible the word " King " is always given as " Tsar.")

Rivers of water and the heart of the Tsar are in the hand of God.—
Proverbs xxi., ver. 1.

The Tsar's wrath is the messenger of death.—Proverbs xvi., ver. 14.

We wait for light but behold obscurity, for brightness, but we walk
in darkness. . .

We look for judgment but there is none, for salvation but it is far
from us.—Isaiah lix., ver. 9 and 11.

In the lips of the Tsar is the decisive word.—Proverbs xvi., ver. 10.

The bright face of the Tsar is life.—Proverbs xvi., ver. 15.

By Mercy and truth iniquity is purged.—Proverbs xvi., ver. 6.

When a man's ways please the Lord he maketh even his enemies
to be at peace with him.—Proverbs xvi., ver. 7.

Lord direct Thou the heart of the Tsar.

This letter and the illuminated text I sent, as arranged, to the Lord Chamberlain by special messenger.

Next morning, on thinking over some questions which the Prince had put to me concerning my Russian antecedents, I deemed it advisable to give him certain references and to send him at the same time all the letters I had brought with me from representative Englishmen.

The forenoon I spent watching the coming and going at the railway station, and it was here that I saw the smartest specimens of the Russian Army, besides many representatives of the Allied Powers.

The man in charge of the sleeping car was friendly and communicative. " It is hardly credible what is going on at present," he remarked, shaking his head thoughtfully. " Take, for example, not very far from here is a field in which a thousand head of cattle have been buried. They had been bought up by the

Government, and a contractor received 75 kopeks per head to feed and keep them, but he starved the poor beasts, and put the money into his own pocket. Somehow things leaked out, and officials came to enquire into matters, but, of course, then everything appeared in good order, fodder was plentiful. As soon, however, as the Commission left all was as bad as before. Will you believe me, lady, everyone of those thousand cattle has died, and to think that we are short of meat."

We discussed all sorts of subjects—the man proved to be well read and one who had thought out things for himself.

"I do not believe priests are any good," he said in the course of conversation, "for if they were, they would not want money for everything. 'Pay so many roubles they say, or I will not bury your child.' Or, take another point," he said, looking at me with a very serious expression, "why do our priests keep silent about all the things which are being done?—let them speak out."

Later in the day, as I was reading in my unique hotel, I was startled by a knock at the door. I jumped up at once to open it. There stood the Assistant Commandant of the Station and beside him a gentleman who, with a polite bow, handed me a letter.

"From His Majesty," he said simply. "Are you satisfied?" he then asked me smiling, and if I looked as happy as I felt, I must indeed have looked very satisfied.

I glanced at the address.

"Yes," I replied, "for this letter contains an answer to my letter," and so it proved. "I will help," were the Emperor's own words.

The courtier seemed to enjoy his rôle of messenger, and for a few moments we chatted pleasantly together. He urged me to ask for an audience with the Empress : " You have merely to show this letter, which bears not only His Majesty's handwriting, but also his personal seal," he said, " and every door will be open to you."

I had, however, no desire whatever to see the Empress, about whom I had heard much that did not make me anxious to meet her. Besides, there was no need to do so as I had achieved my aim. Still, as the court official thought it was my duty to try and see her, I decided to do so in order to solicit her help for the escaped prisoners of war. The men had told me that they had expected to be reviewed by the Tsar himself, and the utter neglect which had been meted out to them had wounded them deeply. Here was a chance for the Empress to bring joy to her subjects.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

AT TSARSKOE SELO.

IN accordance with the advice received I got out of the train at Tsarskoe Selo. The only vehicle at the station was a ramshackle drosky in charge of a mere child, whom I asked to drive me to the Palace. Off we went. On reaching the gates we were stopped

by the guard on duty. Now was the moment to produce the letter bearing the Emperor's handwriting and seal. It acted like magic. The guard rang up the Lady-in-Waiting for whom I had enquired, and a few minutes later the great gates swung open and the shabby drosky drove into the beautiful grounds of the Palace.

In order to reach that part of the building where the Lady-in-Waiting had her suite of rooms, we had to pass the principal entrance. There, talking to a soldier, stood one of the Empress's Heyduks in his fantastic livery. On arrival I was met by a footman who led me to the private apartments of — who greeted me very graciously. I told her the object of my journey. Suddenly, however, she drew herself up and said with a tone of finality in her voice :

“ Her Majesty never interferes in politics, and will therefore be unable to help you with regard to the amnesty.”

“ I am happy to say that His Majesty the Emperor is already fully informed on the subject, so there is really no need to trouble Her Majesty at all in this matter,” I replied. “ There is, however, something else I have at heart that I would like to interest her in ; it concerns the fate of the soldiers who have escaped from captivity in Germany.” Then I put the whole case briefly before her.

“ Do you think it would be possible for Her Majesty to review these men ? ” I asked. “ The King of England has done so, and it is most desirable that some member of the Imperial House, here in Russia, should do the same.”

I mentioned it to the Lady-in-Waiting that I was

expecting to be sent for to the Prince of Oldenburg in connection with the same question. "Who advised you to go to him?" she asked. I gave her the desired information, and then shyly told her that it had been suggested to me that I ought to have presented a copy of my book, "A Thousand Years of Russian History," to the Empress. "His Majesty graciously accepted one some months ago," I said, "but the reason for my not sending one to Her Majesty is that I did not wish to flood the Imperial household with my own work. Now, however, I have brought a copy with me. As I had not taken one with me, Professor Miliukoff, to whom I gave it in London, has kindly given me his copy. I hope Her Majesty will therefore excuse the fact that there is the wrong date on the flyleaf."

"Oh, I am sure she will," said the Lady-in-Waiting, taking the book out of my hand with evident interest. "May I give it to her to-day when I see her?"

"Certainly," I replied, adding: "Do you think there is any chance of Her Majesty seeing *me* to-day?"

"I am afraid not, for quite apart from her hospital work, Her Majesty is fully booked up for the next few days. How much longer are you staying in Petrograd?" she asked.

"Only three more days, although, of course, I could postpone my journey," I answered. Then, as though a sudden thought had struck her, she said with a touch of antagonism:

"You have not by any chance asked the Empress Mother to take the escaped prisoners of war under her protection?"

"No," I replied, "I did tell her all about them, but what I asked her to do was merely to open up the way for me to the Emperor."

This seemed to reassure her, and the momentary stiffness vanished. We then went on to talk about a mutual acquaintance. Every now and then during our conversation my eyes had rested longingly on a crystal bowl on a silver stand filled with the most tempting sweets. It was indeed tantalising not to have a taste of one.

As I stepped into the drosky the stately footman good-humouredly chaffed my coachman.

"What a little cock thou art," he said; "so young and already an *izvoshtchik*!"

"Indeed, I am not an *izvoshtchik*," retorted the child with a toss of his head. "I had only come to the station to fetch a relation, but as she didn't turn up I gave this lady a lift."

In spite of this independent attitude the boy accepted with alacrity the full fare of an *izvoshtchik*.

On my return home I related my experiences to a cousin, and ended up by saying: "As a matter of fact, I have no desire whatever to see the young Empress." This struck my cousin as very foolish. "I cannot respect her," I objected; "I am as glad to bend before those whom I love and respect as I am unwilling to do so to her—my back is too straight for that sort of thing," I added.

"You are very unjust," she exclaimed; "the Empress is ill and her mind is unbalanced. You should have compassion on her. As to her relations with Rasputin, those are due to her love for her son."

I shook my head, for I had heard too much about

this miserable affair from people who had every reason to know what they were talking about.

Two days later I received a very amiable letter from the Lady-in-Waiting, in which no mention whatever was made of an audience. It conveyed to me Her Majesty's thanks for the book, and the assurance that the Empress was much interested in the escaped prisoners of war and had taken up my suggestion.

I was very pleased, for I had what I desired—I did not see the Empress, and yet my protégés became her charge.

I was told later that the fact of my having been received in Kiev was sufficient reason for not being granted the audience in Tsarskoe Selo.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A JOYFUL SURPRISE.

IMMEDIATELY on my return from that exceedingly interesting journey to Kiev and headquarters, so full of unique experiences, I rang up Mr. Stepanoff's Secretary, to find out when I could see the Minister.

The next day at 11 o'clock I entered his waiting-room, and found there a pompous-looking Jew, evidently also awaiting an audience. Never before had I seen on any hands, either of man or woman, diamonds to equal his in quantity and quality. The

sight of the diamonds hurt me. "Here is a speculator who has got rich since the war," I said to myself.

The young Secretary came in and invited me into his room for a chat.

"The matter you are keen on has been looked into, and quite a lot of work has been done," he said.

In the course of conversation I told him of my idea to organise in England an exhibition of reproductions of Russian pictures in aid of the Russian prisoners of war in Germany*; and that I would be grateful if he would help me to secure some of the big War Loan posters which I saw everywhere on the walls, but which were not for sale, as they were issued by the Imperial Bank. "I will ask my chief to help you. I am sure he will do all he can to secure them for you," he said, encouragingly.

This time a very different reception was accorded to me by the great man. He actually met me in the middle of the room.

"I have prepared the list of exiles for you," he said, pointing to a bundle of papers in blue covers, "and I find that we can liberate 120 out of the 670. The Minister of the Interior, Mr. Khvostoff, says that he can do so in his own responsibility, so there is no need whatever to trouble His Majesty about it."

I rejoiced at his news, but was surprised and distressed at this proof of the autocratic power wielded by a Minister.

Mr. Stepanoff then proceeded to show me the list of exiles, which was tabulated according to locality,

*As a result of these Exhibitions, held in London at King's College and the Mansion House, also at Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Portsmouth, a sum of over £1,000 was realised within a few months.

date, period of banishment, and date of liberation, and also cause of exile. I was surprised to find the word "spy"* so frequently, and in one case I actually read "Agent-Provocateur."

"I thought an Agent-Provocateur was employed by the Police—why, then, is this one punished?" I asked in astonishment.

The Minister smiled: "Many a man hopes that by becoming an Agent-Provocateur he will receive reward and promotion—which, of course, happens if he succeeds; but if it becomes known that he is one, he is taken and punished."†

The Minister checked off the names of those exiles whom he had marked for liberation.

"Who are the men you are liberating?" I asked.

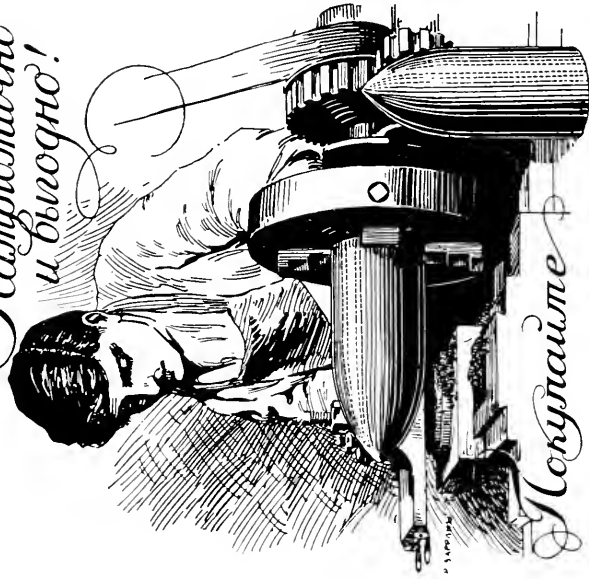
"Mostly workmen who had been banished for belonging to workmen's associations," he answered. Then in reply to my question as to the system according to which people are being banished by administrative order, he told me that if there were suspicions, but not sufficient proof for handing the case over to a Court, the suspects were banished by administrative order! I asked him how many administrative exiles there were in the different Provinces. Nowhere a large number in one place, it appeared.

"Some of these men have finished their term this autumn," I said, pointing to certain names on the list. "Will you not include these in the amnesty?"

*It was one of the tricks of the late Government to mix such undesirables amongst the Political Exiles in order to discredit the latter.

†How contrary to truth this statement was is seen by the lists of names of Agent-Provocateurs published since the Revolution in Russian newspapers; lists found in the Police archives, etc.

*Патриотично
и выгодно!*



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5 1/2% ЗАЕМЪ**

"Patriotic and Profitable; buy 5 1/2 %
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прсинавая кровь за родину,
святю исполняетъ своей
долгъ.

Исполните и вы своей - подпишитесь на заемъ.

"Our gallant St. George is shedding his blood for the Fatherland, and
is wholeheartedly fulfilling his duty—Do yours and buy shares."

WAR LOAN POSTERS.

"No," he replied, "for their time in any case is soon over." In my heart I reckoned this to him for righteousness as, had he included these among the list, he might have fictitiously swelled the number of men set free.

"I'll tell you what I will do," he said suddenly. "It will hasten matters, and at the same time give you joy. I will send the order for the release of the exiles in Siberia by telegram to the Governors concerned."

This, indeed, was a very generous extra. "Will you ring me up to tell me when the wire has been despatched?" I asked. This he promised to do. How my heart rejoiced! I felt overcome at the thought of what this telegram would mean for the exiles and for their friends. I think my cousin thought me off my head when I returned—I danced for joy!

A great surprise awaited me that evening. I was rung up on the telephone and informed that the Minister of the Interior, Mr. Khvostoff, was sending me a letter to the effect that in consequence of our conversation he was releasing 120 men. And this was the man who, as Minister of Justice, had categorically refused to do anything to help.

"May I publish this letter in England?" I asked.

"Yes, of course, only the Minister begs that you will not publish the letter in Russia before it has appeared in the English Press."

"Then will the Russian Press be permitted to reprint this news?" I asked.

"That goes without saying," was the reply.

On the following morning a messenger delivered to me the following letter :—

[COPY.]

THE MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR.

DEAR MADAM,

Following on our personal discussion, I have the honour to inform you that to alleviate the fate of administrative exiles sent by order of the Imperial Police to distant Governments of Asiatic and European Russia, I have, after careful review of their cases, made arrangement for the liberation of 120 persons of certain categories from exile and police supervision. As regards those exiles who are in Siberia, this order has been communicated by telegraph to the Governors concerned. Further cases are being considered.

Accept, dear Madam, the assurance of my sincere esteem and devotion.

(Signed) A. KHVOSTOFF.

To Mrs. HOWE,

22nd July, 1916.

3rd August.

This took my breath away, for it promised a further revision and held out the prospect that more men would be set free. However, there was one thing about this letter which made me feel shy and uncomfortable. I had gone to Russia in a perfectly private capacity—merely as a voice—and here is the Minister of the Interior writing me an official letter for publication. Besides, I realised that the British public would find it

difficult to understand how it came about that a Minister, and not the Tsar, was liberating exiles.

Next day I met one of the other Ministers, to whom I told the good news, and also that Mr. Makaroff, the Minister of Justice, had informed me that before the proposal for a general amnesty could be put before the Emperor; the Council of Ministers would have to pass it.

“ Will you help me ? ” I asked him.

“ My dear lady, rest assured there will be no difficulty from that quarter. We are all in favour of it, and what the Council of Ministers lays before His Majesty, the Emperor will sign ! ”

His words naturally made me very happy—but what a light they shed upon the ruler !

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

VERIFIED FACTS.

THE day after my return from the South, I went again to the cynical Commander-in-Chief of the Petrograd district in order to find out what his Staff Officer had reported. The amiable, and infinitely patient officer in attendance immediately admitted me to General Khabaloff, who greeted me with an exceedingly serious look on his face.

“ Your Excellency,” I said, “ I have merely come to ask you—Did I tell you a fairy tale or did I not ? ”

"No," he answered quietly, "you did not; but everything will come out all right in the end. . . . You see—the Commissariat . . . war-time . . . everything cannot be done at once . . ."

"I quite understand," I said; "anyhow, thank you for receiving me, and for having sent someone to make enquiries. Meanwhile I have put the whole matter before His Majesty, and have asked him, as you suggested, graciously to pass a new law on behalf of the men who have escaped from captivity in Germany, so that they may be given all they require."

"The Emperor can do anything," he said sarcastically. "If he says that summer is winter, then it is winter; and if he says winter is summer, then it is so."

"There is no need to be so sarcastic," I interposed, annoyed by his gratuitous and meaningless sneer at his Sovereign. Then I rose to go.

"To-morrow I am to have an audience with the Prince of Oldenburg, with regard to my protégés," I said, as we shook hands.

I wondered what his thoughts were when I left him—he quite realised that I was not merely bluffing. I think my coolness took his breath away for the moment.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A GRAND OLD MAN.

" His Imperial Highness will be very pleased to receive you in audience, if the matter you wish to bring before him concerns the wounded, or comes in any way within the sphere of the Sanitary Department, and if this is the case will you please ring up the Palace to say that you are coming, and the car will meet you at the station ? "

Thus read the telephone message which I found on my return from the interview with General Khabaloff.

Now by no stretch of imagination could prisoners of war escaped from German captivity be made to answer the description of wounded men, and yet I felt, seeing the state they were in, that my dear protégés ought somehow or other to come in under that department over which Prince Alexander of Oldenburg presides. I rang up the General who had sent the message : " Yes," he said in answer to my query, " these were the exact words of His Imperial Highness."

What was I to do ? To force myself under false pretences upon this warm-hearted but very busy man was impossible.

" Your Excellency," I pleaded, " will you for a moment forget that you are a General and the Secretary of His Imperial Highness and just tell me what you would do in such a case ? "

Such a pleasant, amused laugh came through the telephone: "You have asked me a ticklish question. Have you any time to spare?"

"Any amount," I replied.

"Then go down to Stara-Petergof and tell the Adjutant on duty all about the matter you wish to bring before the Prince. He will decide whether it belongs to His Imperial Highness's Department or not."

"Thank you," I said, very pleased with this suggestion.

The next day, after one hour's railway journey, I reached Stara-Petergof—or Old Peterhof. The promised car, however, was not there to meet me, the only vehicle standing outside the station being a private carriage with two horses.

"Have you been sent by the Prince of Oldenburg?" I asked the coachman, but his reply was in the negative. I looked about me in perplexity, for the distance was too great for me to walk—especially as I was not at all well at the time. The stately coachman, seeing the predicament I was in, bent down to me and said: "I am driving past the house—get in and I will take you there." An invitation which I gladly accepted.

In a beautiful park stands the summer residence of the Prince Alexander Petrovitch of Oldenburg. It looks like an ordinary old English country house. There was an atmosphere of simplicity about the whole place—obviously the abode of a man who works. His young Adjutant listened attentively to my report and then said impulsively: "Of course, His Imperial Highness must hear about this; please take a seat, while I go and announce you."



H.I.H. PRINCE ALEXANDER PETROVITCH OF OLDENBURG.

A few minutes later I was ushered into the study, and there behind a writing-table, strewn with papers, sat the martial old Prince. He rose to greet me with an enquiring, but kindly look. There were some five or six gentlemen present—generals, medical men and court officials. Evidently I had come into the midst of a Council Meeting of the Red Cross.

Having been invited by the Prince to make my statement, I repeated my story, which by now I could almost have told in my sleep. "What I want especially, Your Imperial Highness," I ventured to say, "is for one of your gentlemen to come with me to see for himself the conditions under which the men who have escaped from captivity are now living." To my intense satisfaction the Prince immediately turned to one of the generals present and requested him to accompany me to the dépôt.

All, however, was to turn out differently.

I had not reached the foot of the stairs when one of the Gentlemen-in-Waiting ran after me with the message that the Prince had decided to come with me himself. I was delighted—this was more than I had dared to hope for. The amiable Prince also invited me to stay to lunch, during which meal many interesting topics were discussed, and I realised what a veritable power-house was the brain of this active, keen and capable President of the Sanitary Service.

One of the gentlemen mentioned the activity of the Y.M.C.A. in France. "What kind of Society is that?" the Prince asked with evident interest. Thereupon General T. explained to him the scope and aims of this magnificent organisation. We all realised that the Russian soldiers would have been much better off

had the Y.M.C.A. had their huts in Russia, as in the other war zones. I was pleased to find that the General knew and admired John R. Mott, this statesman among Christian leaders, whom he had met when on a visit to Russia.

A never-to-be-forgotten motor drive of one and a half hours followed, full of interest. I was astonished at the intimate knowledge and grasp of detail which the Prince displayed on practically every subject mentioned.

"I am so disappointed about the action of the British Red Cross," the Prince suddenly exclaimed. "I cannot understand why our offer for British officers to visit the Russian Spas has not been accepted."

The Prince then told me of the invitation to British officers to come to the Caucasian Spas, and it was evident that he felt very sore that his generous suggestion had met with such scant response. Anxious to do something in return for his kindness and also realising how beneficial such a sign of goodwill might be for the future relations between the two countries, I offered to do my best to get the invitation made public.

"There is, however, one great obstacle to the successful carrying out of your scheme, Imperial Highness," I remarked, "and that is the cost of the journey."

"Then I will pay the travelling expenses of the first ten officers and the first ten men from London," he replied impulsively, "and all the others will have free return tickets from Torneo to the Caucasus, and of course all will enjoy our hospitality at the Spas."

This offer materially altered the situation and we plunged into the details of the project. The Prince told me of the various diseases curable by the different kinds of waters, and it appeared that the British visitors were to be the guests of the Russian Sanitary Service, which meant free board and lodging, free medical treatment, and the enjoyment of all the privileges attaching to the Spa.

I pointed out to the warm-hearted Prince that before I could take any steps in England he must furnish me with a written authorisation, and then I would do my best to pass on the invitation. He waxed quite eloquent over his plans, for he was cheered by the thought that after all his pet scheme might materialise.*

Among other things, we also spoke about the wonderful effect of the abolition of alcohol, and we discussed the best ways and means of solving the post-bellum drink question—for that total abolition cannot be carried on for ever is plain to all. The Prince thought that the light wines grown in the Crimea might serve as a good substitute. As I sat beside the old man my eyes fell again and again upon the beautiful St. George's Cross His Imperial Highness wore on his uniform—that of a Hussar Regiment. At last I ventured to remark that his was the most beautiful St. George's

*In the letter which the Prince wrote to me to England the following sentence appeared: "J'espère que le séjour en Russie de nos frères d'armes blessés servira à cimenter encore plus les liens d'amitié qui unissent nos deux pays."

This invitation has since been accepted by the Army Council and by the Lords of the Admiralty, and we hope that soon circumstances will permit British officers to enjoy the hospitality so gladly and generously offered.

Cross I had seen on any man, whereupon he quite simply remarked that this particular one had been a present.

His Adjutant told me afterwards that the Prince had earned the St. George's Cross in the War of 1877-1878.

CHAPTER XL.

THE BIRDS HAD FLOWN.

WE drove into the grounds of the Recruiting Dépôt. It was raining, and the passages and stairs of the building through which we had to pass were crowded with recruits and their women-folk. No one recognised the identity of the Prince as he got out of his car and followed me through the throng of people into the barracks in which my men were housed. The eagle glance of the old man seemed to take in every detail. Usually when I had come to visit my friends the upper windows were crowded with men looking out into the yard. This time there was no one to be seen—the place seemed deserted.

“Where are the men who have escaped from captivity in Germany?” the Prince asked a soldier.

“They are no longer here, Your Excellency.”

“Your birds are flown,” he said, turning to me—“still, we shall go on and see where they have been.”

The large rooms were spotlessly clean, but empty. Spring-cleaning, sudden and drastic, had swept over these barracks. We all laughed—my visit of yesterday to General Khabaloff had evidently resulted in this wholesale clearance. I suppose he had realised that I meant to see the thing through, and he knew quite well that once the matter reached the ears of the energetic Prince of Oldenburg, he would send someone to inquire into it—hence the spotless rooms and the absence of all men who might be asked awkward questions. He had not, however, taken into account the thorough and energetic nature of the impulsive Prince, and the possibility of his inspecting the place personally never even occurred to the General.

After having at last elicited the information that the men we wished to see had been taken to the Kalinkin Brewery—now used as a barracks—the Prince said laconically: "Let us drive there."

On our way back to the motor car we had again to pass through the crowd of women and recruits, upon whom it had begun to dawn that this particular old General must be somebody very important, for the three gentlemen who accompanied him addressed him in such a deferential manner. The simple people gazed upon our party with undisguised interest.

Someone had gone off to fetch the Commandant, but we were back in the motor and away before that much harassed and overworked official had time to show himself.

We had to drive a long distance, and as the Prince pointed out all the places of interest along the route, I gained a great deal of fresh knowledge about the various historic buildings we passed.

Outside the brewery stood a group of soldiers with hang-dog faces—"a bad lot" was the Prince's remark—and he proved to be right, for they turned out to be deserters and other undesirables in uniform. Again the same curt question:

"Where are the men who have escaped from captivity?"

"They are not here, Your Excellency."

"Where are they then?"

"In Ochta, Your Excellency."

"Your birds have flown from here too. But we shall drive after them until we find them," remarked the determined Imperial Highness, with a laugh.

Ochta, however, is at the opposite end of the town, and it took us some time to reach the barracks of the Tcherkaski Regiment, to which we were now directed.

The big gates swung open and I received my first glance of a barracks in working order, and not merely a dumping-ground for innumerable raw recruits, as the other *dépôt* had been. 'Activity everywhere—some soldiers at drill, others carrying great hot loaves from the bakehouse.

We drove right into the barracks yard, for the Prince had already asked the indispensable question, and this time the reply was prompt and satisfactory. We got out of the motor and walked into the beautifully kept barracks No. 3, but although it was not here that we found our men we at least saw for ourselves how clean, tidy and comfortable such quarters could be.

Meanwhile the young Adjutant slipped away to give notice of the Prince's arrival; when, therefore, a few minutes later we entered the spacious room in which

my men had been quartered, they stood drawn up in line beside their bunks.

In reply to the Prince's greeting the proper salutation wishing him good health was given. Then, silently, His Imperial Highness inspected the soldiers, who, in true Russian military fashion, followed him with their eyes.

I walked beside him, giving an occasional glance of recognition at one or other of the men. It was a very impressive sight to see three hundred and eighty men standing there rigid at attention, while the old Prince, amidst a dead silence, walked about, taking the measure of each. It was also intensely interesting to watch the look of blank astonishment on the faces of the officers in charge of the barracks who had gathered round. After the first round the Prince started again—this time pointing at this or that man, asking: "Where did you escape from?" "How many days did it take you to come over the frontier?"

An atmosphere of expectancy—eager, joyful—pervaded the room. Looking around I saw the two tidy tiers of bunks on which the bedding was rolled up for the day, a Turkish towel hanging at the back of each bunk.

Silently and thoughtfully the old man descended the staircase, and then, turning to the Adjutant, he commanded him to draw up a report stating the exceedingly satisfactory condition of the barracks; then, addressing the Lieut.-Colonel, he asked him several pointed questions. It appeared that these men arrived at these barracks without his having received any previous notification. "I have tried to make

them comfortable," he said, "and they declare that already they feel different men."

Outside in the courtyard, surrounded by the officers and his suite, the Prince gave his orders—four hundred shirts were to be sent down immediately from the Red Cross, and all the men were to be taken to the baths. I had told him of their being unable to afford to go to the baths themselves—and that on the long sea journey from France to Archangel they had been deprived of this necessity of life.

"Your Imperial Highness," I said, "please do not forget to arrange for the free passage home, the overdue pay, and the food money for the journey."

Imagine my astonishment when the Colonel informed us that these men had just as much right to free tickets and food money as the wounded had. Truly surprising after General Khabaloff's explicit declaration that such a thing was impossible and illegal. I felt very happy and greatly relieved, and I was just going to express my gratitude to the Prince and bid him good-bye when he most kindly suggested taking me home in his car.

On the way back the Prince spoke most kindly and graciously to me, assuring me that it was for him to be grateful to me, and that I might rest content in the knowledge that I had secured the happiness of 300 men.

"Fortunately it is not only these particular three hundred and eighty men who will benefit, but the many hundreds who are coming after them," I said. "The best assurance that I have really achieved something for these brave men is the fact that Your Imperial Highness is taking them under your wing."

When I parted from the Prince I realised that his energetic Imperial Highness had devoted four and a half hours to my business. It was now 4 o'clock, and I had been received by him at 11.30.

When I told Lady Georgina Buchanan about the Prince's visit, she remarked regretfully, "I am sorry he didn't see those rooms as we saw them."*

"There I do not agree with you," I said. "I am very glad it came out as it did, for the Prince of Oldenburg knows quite well how dirty Russian barracks can be, but I should never have known that such beautiful, clean barracks existed in Russia as those we saw on our impromptu visit to Ochta."

CHAPTER XLI.

SOME MILITARY HOSPITALS—GOOD, BAD AND INDIFFERENT.

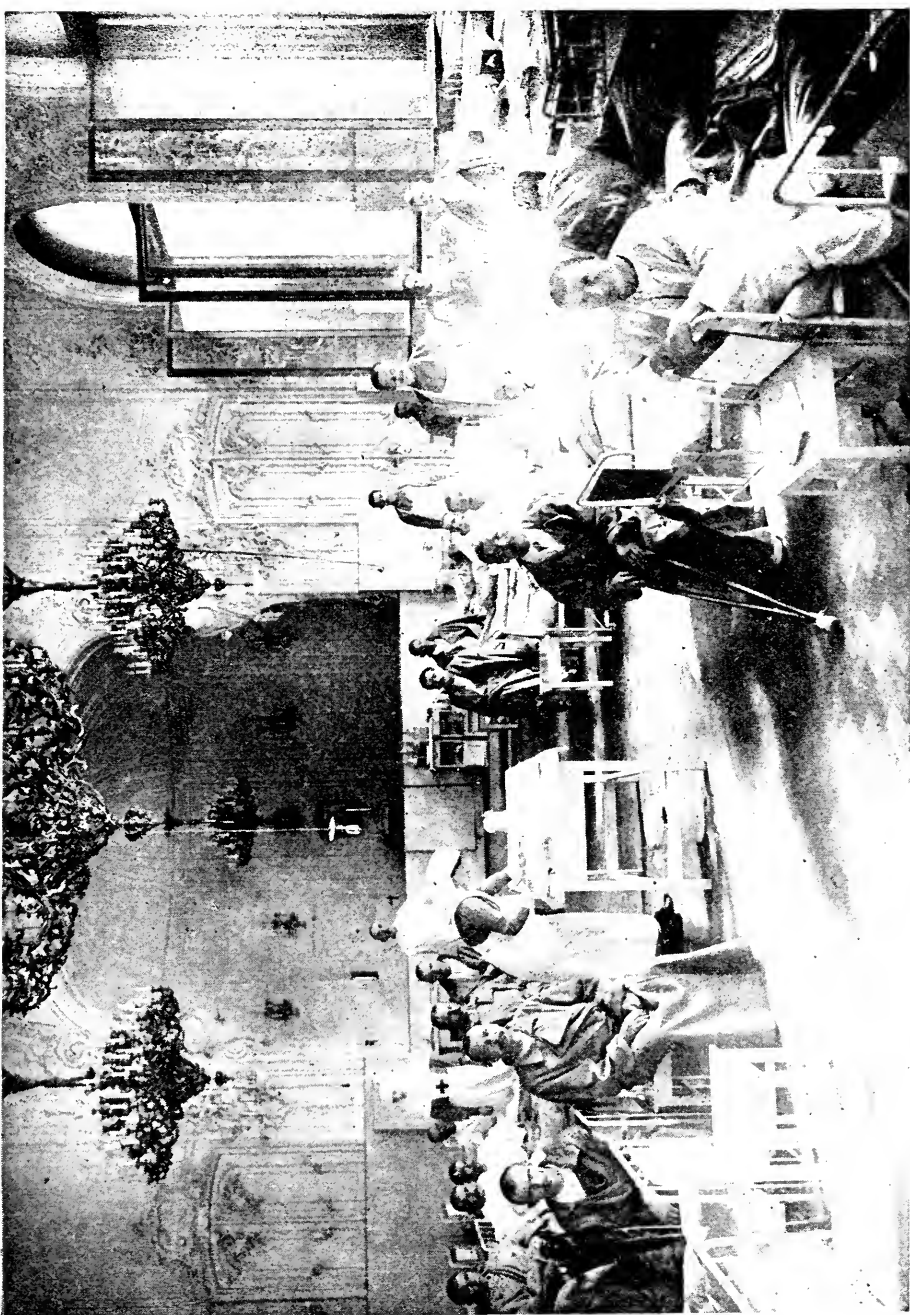
PETROGRAD, like other Russian towns, is at present a city of military hospitals, or lazarets, and in almost every street I drove through, I saw the big white flag with the Red Cross on it displayed outside some private house or public building. In some instances it was merely a flat which had been turned into a lazaret, in others, the whole building.

*One day I had taken the wife of the British Ambassador to see the men, and in the kindness of her heart Lady Georgina presented the whole lot with new shirts.

Beautiful palaces, along the quay of the Neva, and humble wooden houses on the outskirts of the town, as well as schools and club-houses, are being used as hospitals. Across the wall, or just above the entrance of these houses, an inscription in big, bold letters is displayed, which bears the name of the person or persons responsible for the upkeep, and the name of some Imperial patron. On very many of them I read that of Her Imperial Majesty, the Empress Maria Feodorovna.

The supporters of these makeshift hospitals, which are, however, all under the Russian Red Cross, belong to widely different sets of people. Both in Moscow and Petrograd, and I presume they are typical of the other towns as well, one reads on these boards : " This lazaret is supported by the former pupils of — (such and such school), or by the employees of banks, insurance companies, by van drivers, private families, by the parishioners of certain churches, by members of different religious communities, and even by foreigners. Thus there is the Anglo-Russian hospital, supported from Great Britain, also the Convalescent Home for the Russian wounded, provided for by members of the British Colony. There is a lazaret maintained by the Japanese, another by Swedes, and so forth. Of course, all these establishments are over and above the regular big military hospitals, or the wards in general hospitals taken over by the Red Cross.

There is also great difference in the management of these seven hundred odd lazarets and hospitals, among which good, bad and indifferent are represented. There is an enormous difference between the perfections



ONE OF THE WARDS OF THE ANGLO-RUSSIAN HOSPITAL IN THE PALACE OF THE
GRAND DUKE DMITRI PAVLOVITCH IN PETROGRAD.

of the big Marienski Hospital, and the flagrant imperfections of the old Nicolai Hospital, an unreformed hospital of the days of the Crimean War. Indeed, so undesirable are the conditions of the latter, that fractious patients of other hospitals are threatened with being sent there for punishment.

Thus there are beautiful hospitals, arranged according to the newest patterns, and provided with every possible comfort, while others have such a minimum of bare necessities that it hurts one to visit them, and yet the soldiers are always grateful and patient.

I watched them lying in their beds enduring great suffering with fortitude. I talked to convalescent men as they occupied themselves with the making of various things for sale. In one lazaret, the nurse showed me proudly the envelopes her patients had been making; in another it was baskets which had been deftly turned out. The last time I visited the Anglo-Russian Hospital I watched a group of patients making leather pocket-books. Truly a strange work-room this, the landing of the broad staircase in the palace of a Grand Duke. The patients here lie in lofty rooms, ceilings and walls decorated with white and gold.

It is Lady Muriel Paget who has so successfully organised this hospital, and the British public generously supports it on Russian flag days. The big signboard displayed outside on the corner of the palace tells every passer-by that this hospital is a practical expression of British friendship towards her Russian Ally. Indeed, the name *Anglo-Russian* Hospital is very apposite, for Russian soldiers are the

patients, while British and Russian nurses tend them. British money maintains the hospital within a Russian building, in which British ideals of hospital life are applied, and the chief desire of the British nurses is to make their Russian patients comfortable and happy.

A few houses further along the same street is the hospital named after King George, and it is difficult to imagine a greater contrast than between the Anglo-Russian Hospital and this lazaret. It is very poor, and merely occupies a large flat of an ordinary house. It lacks all the brightness of the palace, all extras of comfort, but the men are well fed and well nursed, and the charming Polish lady who superintends loves her work, and she and the other nurses are devoted to their charges.

It was here that I witnessed a touching scene. The wife of the British Ambassador had kindly taken me on a visit to this hospital, where she was going to distribute to the soldiers to be discharged, presents to take home to wife and children. Lady Georgina had hit upon this practical method of demonstrating to the people in the villages British goodwill.

Gay-looking bundles of baby-clothes for the married men, and brightly-coloured bags for the bachelors, had been taken out of two big sacks which we had brought with us in the motor. On each bundle was a slip of paper with the name of the wounded soldier, the number of his children, and their respective ages. The invalids who were going home on leave clustered around their benefactress. To each one of these men she gave a present with a kindly word, her face all radiant with thankfulness that she was able to make easier the lot of these brave and patient men.

A few moments after the distribution of these tokens of thoughtful care, I walked through the wards, and there saw men sitting on their beds undoing their bundles. Some were surrounded by comrades, all eagerly watching the happy recipient of the useful presents for wife and children, not one of whom was forgotten. Here was a Cossack who was proudly admiring a bright blouse which he had received for his daughter of seventeen; there was the happy father of an infant son, aged four months, whom he had not yet seen, but to whom, thanks to Lady Georgina's kindness, he was going to bring back a supply of soft, warm baby-clothes. The husbands and fathers also were not overlooked by the generous donor, but received the same presents as the bachelors. One of the latter showed me his treasures—three handkerchiefs, a piece of soap, a packet of cigarettes, some sugar and tea, a pencil, envelopes, a booklet, and last, but not least, a good, solid, wooden spoon. "Without one of these we should starve, for what should we eat our soup with?" remarked one of the men, proudly brandishing a shiny lacquered spoon.

Never shall I forget this little visit to King George's Hospital, and the picture of the Lady Bountiful surrounded by wounded Russians in hospital dressing-gowns, their happy, expectant faces, her kindly glance as she presented each man with his gift, and the grateful soldier stooping and kissing the hand which had liberally bestowed good things upon him. I watched the faces of the men who lay in their beds, and saw on them a look of hopeful contentment—they knew that in good time their turn would also come.

Everywhere on the streets of the towns one sees small groups of wounded soldiers walking about in charge of some Sister, often quite a young girl. The men are taken to museums, to the Zoological Gardens, to various places of amusement. In the hall of one of the hospitals, I observed a group of wounded soldiers sitting very quietly and solemnly, with serious faces. This was especially surprising, as I had been told of the friendly and cheerful spirit prevailing in this particular hospital. My kind guide was utterly at a loss to understand the listless attitude of the men. Soon after, however, she detected the reason for the unusual behaviour. The men had asked for leave to visit a cinema, and were now waiting the verdict of the matron. Would they be permitted to go or not?—hence their serious looks.

As to the nurses, all classes are represented amongst them. In Tsarskoe Selo the Empress herself devotes many hours a day to the nursing of the wounded, and many of the Grand Duchesses are doing real work, not merely playing at nursing. Thus the unmarried sister of the Tsar, the Grand Duchess Olga, who is matron of her big hospital in Kiev, works so hard that she has hardly any time to see her mother, the Empress Dowager, who, in order to be near her daughter, spent the summer in Kiev. Then there are the nurses of humbler birth, who do their work just as joyfully and carefully.*

It was quite a pleasure to me to watch in tram-cars and in the street the bright young faces of these Sisters

*Out of the 20,000 nurses 17,000 were honorary. The majority of these are poor girls, but they are satisfied to work for love. Uniform, travel, and lodging are, of course, supplied.

of Mercy—everyone of whom wears a graceful white veil. The difference in the way that coif is worn serves as the distinguishing mark of the various societies ; thus the Grand Duchess Olga wears the costume of the sisterhood called after St. Eugenia, while the Empress and her daughters wear that of the Red Cross.

Everybody is at work—all women seem to be anxious to do their share, though perhaps not all from the same motive. In Russia, too, as elsewhere, there is a certain glamour about nursing the wounded heroes, and many a girl has more thought of the man than of the wounded soldier. I was told on good authority that when the first batch of voluntary nurses arrived at the front they were inspected by the Grand Duke Nicholas, who asked those ladies who desired to nurse officers to step on one side. Quite a number did so, but to their surprise, the Grand Duke informed them that he had no use for them, and one and all were sent back. The great soldier had tested the metal, and refused that which was mixed with alloy.

I wonder what he would have done with a most beautiful titled lady, who frankly admitted that she had joined the Red Cross for the fun of the thing. She loves adventures and hairbreadth escapes, and I heard her relate how she had made the General occupying her house lend her his car and an adjutant, in order to go about. How, one day they had driven close to where the shells were bursting. " I had no right to risk the Staff car," she said, " so I got out and walked on, when suddenly the adjutant gripped me by the arm, and with a deadly white face declared that not a step further would he let me go."

It struck me that she evidently considered the car of greater value than the life of the adjutant.

"Well, I was forced to return," she added; "the chauffeur looked at me with reproving eyes, and asked me this question, 'You have no children?'"

"What does your husband say to your escapades in nurse's uniform?" I asked this beautiful woman, whose laughing eyes were proclaiming the knowledge of their power.

"Oh, he does not know anything about them. He is occupied at another front. I have seen a great deal." She continued her tale, with eyes sparkling in memory of her exploits. "Of course, I always try to salve my conscience by helping someone, and as I drove about so much in the car of the Staff, I have even been able to bring the General information about various villages. However, I never witnessed a bayonet charge," she added regretfully.

This beautiful lady is fortunately not typical of her Russian sisters, and yet I can well believe that whenever she walks through a hospital ward, men's eyes will rest with pleasure and delight on her, and the laughing, triumphant look in her eyes is sure to act as a tonic to many a weary, wounded soldier on his painful progress towards recovery.

CHAPTER XLII.

MERELY A COSSACK !

HE was a tall Cossack, with a gentle face and almost child-like eyes. As he replied to my question as to what his experiences in captivity had been, his lower jaw trembled. It seemed as if he had to strain every nerve in order to prevent his facial muscles from twitching.

"We had fought desperately," he said, "but were at last cut off from the rest, and twenty-five of us and one officer were taken prisoners. The Austrians said they would shoot us all. You see, we were Cossacks," he said in explanation. "One of the Austrian officers, however, pleaded for us, and the General seemed to get very cross with him, but he persisted, and said that after all we were soldiers like the others, and should be treated as prisoners of war. They think we are wild beasts," the young Cossack added quietly.

"Well, at last the General agreed to spare us, but one of the party he said he would shoot." The tall Cossack gulped a lump down his throat. "We were all put in a row, and the General walked up and down looking at us, choosing whom he would have shot. Then he caught hold of one of us by the coat, and dragged our comrade, as a dog would. They blindfolded him and shot him before our eyes. They treated us very badly," he added, shaking his head mournfully, "and yet we were just soldiers !"

"You look as if you could not wring a chicken's neck," I remarked, struck by his mild and gentle expression.

"I've cut many a German's head off," he replied, in the same even and gentle tone.

CHAPTER XLIII.

IN A PETROGRAD TRAM.

MOST of the passengers in the tram were soldiers. Suddenly one of them got up, shook hands with the man next to him and kissed him. He did this to five or six other men, and then left the tram.

"Is he going off to the front?" I asked the man next to me.

"No," he replied. "It is we who are going off to the positsia (trenches); he came to see us off."

It was all so simple and natural, so straight from the heart. There was nothing sentimental or mawkish about it; just comrades bidding farewell, in all probability never to meet again. True, it was not what Englishmen would have done. A joke, a strong grip of the hand would have been their way of parting; and yet, when it comes to fighting, there is not much to choose between the Russian who expresses his feelings by a kiss and the Anglo-Saxon who smothers his feelings as if ashamed of them.

CHAPTER XLIV.

IMPRESSIONS OF RUSSIAN SOLDIERS.

It was not in orderly rows on parade, nor in battle, that I saw the Russian soldier, but either en route for the front or back from the trenches. I came across him in trains and tram-cars, on stations and in hospitals, or walking about in the street. Were I a painter, I would paint telling pictures of the Russian soldier's life—scenes which would reveal his nature, his patience and endurance, his cheerfulness and kindliness.

I have watched many troop trains, which, by the way, seem to be composed of nothing but cattle trucks or luggage vans. Now, however, as many men as possible are put into them. Long unplanned boards form the soldiers' seats, and many were sitting on these impromptu benches, while others, with their legs dangling down, sat in the open door on the floor. This is how the Russian soldiers travel.

At one station where the train had halted, the men swarmed out on the platform in order to stretch their legs. What seemed to trouble them most was thirst. One of the soldiers, pail in hand, approached the gendarmes, and asked to be let out of the station to the nearest pump to fetch water. "Not permitted," was the laconic reply. There were many passengers standing about waiting for the next train, but somehow nobody except myself seemed to realise that here was a case of need. Stepping up to a railway guard,

I offered to pay him for his trouble, if only he would be kind enough to go and fill the pail of the soldier.

The joy of the thirsty men as he returned with the fresh, cool water was delightful to witness. Encouraged by this success, more pails were brought out by other soldiers, and finally I did the carrying of the pails and the guard did the pumping. The soldiers crowded around the pails, some filled their bottles, others knelt down and lapped the water up, and soon the sunburnt men began to look quite cheerful. When the signal was given for starting, bright faces smiled a farewell, and the refreshed and contented men departed in their uncomfortable cattle-trucks.

There is, however, good reason for not letting the men outside the station, for many men have thereby been separated from their units. It was pathetic to see the distress of a young soldier to whom this had happened ; he was so bitterly unhappy.

" I only went out to buy myself some food," he said, " and when I returned the train had gone. I was trusted. I was sent in charge of some guns. I have the papers here in my pocket, and now the train has gone and I cannot catch it up."

" Is there no passenger train which would enable you to overtake it ? " I said.

" No, there is not," he replied sadly, " and I wonder what will now happen. To think that they have trusted me and I have failed them ! "

I felt intensely sorry for him, especially as no fear of punishment seemed to trouble him, but only the fact that he had not lived up to the trust placed in him by his officer.



WOUNDED SOLDIERS TRAVELLING.



On another occasion I again watched a troop train stop at the station. In this case also the men wanted to go out of the station grounds. A very determined-looking soldier walked up to the gendarme officer, and asked leave to go into the town.

"Not allowed," was the disappointing reply.

"We are sick of our food," remarked the man. "We have been twenty days on our journey, and we want a change. It's hot weather, too, and they've given us bad meat."

"Buy your food at the station canteen," suggested the officer.

Poor chaps, there was no leave granted them to go into the town, although they declared they had three hours to spare. Suddenly, however, orders were given for the train to start. All the soldiers could do was to quickly buy some bread and sausages at the station canteens and scramble into the trucks.

One day our train was drawn up at the station, but my carriage was right outside the platform. On the next line stood a troop train, and hearing laughter and the sound of music, I quickly looked out of the window. There I beheld an old man dancing to the strains of an accordion, played by one of the soldiers, many of whom were standing in the aperture of their van; others were crowding round on the lines.

"His son is among these men," somebody remarked to me, "and the father wants to cheer him." Forgetful of his own troubles, the peasant danced and danced until he nearly collapsed.

"Is he not a fine old man?" a soldier called out, "and to think he is nearly seventy years old. Does he not dance wonderfully well?"

The old man stopped at last, but not before the passengers in my train had given him a good round of applause.

"Bravo, you did it well," a lady beside me called out to him.

"Oh, it is nothing special," he said, looking down just as self-conscious and pleased as a young *débutante*.

As our train moved out I had a last glimpse of the happy faces of the soldiers, whose monotonous journey had been interrupted in so pleasant a way.

Another time it was an ambulance train which stood on the line next to ours, and those of the wounded who were well enough were looking out of the window, while some were sitting on the steps of the carriages. I had been surprised at seeing plants and canary birds in a cage in one of the windows of this hospital train. "Whose are the birds?" I asked one of the wounded soldiers, who was sitting exactly opposite the window of my compartment.

"Not ours," he replied. "They belong to a sanitar. What do we want with birds! It is rest and quiet we need!"

"I have to pass on a greeting to you all," I said. "An English soldier has asked me to greet his Russian comrades-in-arms from him."

"And pray, where did you see him?" was the surprised question.

"I saw him in England," I replied, "for I have come from England."

One of the soldiers laughed merrily, and pointing to his comrades, said to me proudly: "We also have been abroad; we have been to Austria, but now, thanks

to us, that part has become Russian," and just as my train moved out, he shouted :

" Greet our British Allies from us ! "

There seems to be an endless number of troop trains moving along the Russian railway lines, and every carriage is filled with soldiers, in shirts of a " protective " colour, grey-green, brown-green, brown, and some quite green. There is nothing smart about any of them, and on the way back from the front the men look unkempt ; but withal there is an atmosphere of confidence, of quiet strength and immovable determination about them, and also one of friendly gentleness. At times these soldiers struck me like so many boys going off for a holiday.

I have also seen those who come back from the front, wounded men in hospitals, or convalescents, limping along the streets in the charge of some pretty young Sister of Mercy or some staid, elderly matron. There is always the same gentle expression on the face of the men—merely big boys, many of them.

" They are so serious and quiet, not merry like my compatriots," remarked a French officer to me of those wounded men.

" They are wonderful chaps," I was told by an English doctor. " Their patience and endurance are simply incredible."

" They are so grateful for any little help," said an English nurse in the Anglo-Russian Hospital. " Please do find out whether they have everything they wish. They so seldom ask for anything on their own account."

I went up to the bed of a young lad whose leg had been amputated, and who told me that his toes ached terribly—" yet they aren't there at all," he said to

me with a puzzled look. I tried to explain to him the reason for this strange phenomenon, and then I asked what kind of book he would like me to bring him. With shining eyes he replied: "I love to read about detectives," and I soon found out that Sherlock Holmes* was his favourite.

One night, walking unexpectedly into a hospital where I had gone to fetch a lady, I found my friends, the wounded, having a fine time. The gramophone was playing some dance-music, and two of the men, holding up their long dressing-gowns, were dancing as best they could, all the others looking on with happy faces. On seeing my friend and me they suddenly stopped, and when urged to go on, one of them replied that he would only do so if I would dance with him. So, for fun, putting my arms akimbo and placing myself opposite him, I just pretended that I would do it. Then we all laughed and the impromptu dance came to an end.

I have also been with dying soldiers, and have seen them suffer anguish; but invariably they thanked me with grateful lips or eyes for a word of blessing. They *need* God, they know it, and conscious of their helplessness, they trust in Him.

They are not afraid of death, these men, but as one very young soldier said to me, "Who wants to die before his time?"

Once as I watched a group of soldiers going off to the front I called out to them as the train moved out:

"May you all win the St. George's Cross!"

*I was told that translations of Jack London's books were bought more than those of any other author. On every railway bookstall I saw his works.

“Thank you,” came the reply; “but even if we don’t gain one of the four Crosses of St. George, of a fifth we are sure—the wooden cross on our graves.”

Oh, these wooden crosses, the rows and rows of them!

CHAPTER XLV.

PETROGRAD'S CABDRIVERS OF TO-DAY.

COULD one imagine a London taxi-driver turning round and holding a conversation with his fare? Hardly! He is too matter-of-fact a man, and the streets are crowded, and the fare is a stranger, and the Londoner might be surprised at being spoken to by his driver. Not so in Petrograd or Moscow.

Why, some of the deepest subjects are discussed by the izvoshtchik and his fare as the horse runs along, and his little open carriage jolts over the cobblestones. He turns half round and talks, and is perfectly assured that what he does is quite all right, and so it is.

It is human being talking to human being, and after all, there is not much difference between a cab-driver and a barin or a baryinia, for both are souls which God has created, and both are Russians.

The last chat of this kind I had was with an izvosh-tchik who at first had positively refused to drive me,

for my destination was not in the direction he desired. Just at present the izvoshtchiki of Moscow and Petrograd are having the time of their lives. In Petrograd, there were before the war 17,000 such men, but the army has claimed 10,000 of them and their horses, and the 7,000 who have remained are mightily independent.

Gone for ever are the ten and twenty kopek drives, and boldly the threefold sum is asked, and for longer distances it is by roubles that one has to pay. True, there is a card on each drosky with the authorised tariff, but woe to the fare who claims to be driven according to it. He is simply not accepted, and if an unhappy person bargains with an izvoshtchik, no other in that street will give him a lift. What can one do in those circumstances but jump into the drosky and call out, "Drive and I'll pay you well."

Off he starts, nonplussed by this boldness. Then he turns round and asks anxiously :

"Thou art not expecting me to drive thee according to the tax?"

"Of course not; only please hurry up!"

Queer drivers I have had—some of them lads of fourteen and fifteen, who have donned their father's hats, which come down deep over the ears, and the coachman's habit hangs down in heavy folds around the little figure. The father has gone to the war, and the little son is carrying on the business. Then again, there are old men, whose bent backs seem so out of place on a coachbox. But then, what is there to be done? "One must live, you see, and why not as a driver? And as to asking such a sum, surely the lady knows how expensive fodder has become,

and how dear food is. Oh, no, two and a half roubles is really very cheap."

One day, when anxious to be in time at an important interview, and bearing in mind how difficult it is to find an izvoshtchik, I had taken the precaution of going by tram to a certain little railway station where I knew a drosky would be sure to stand. My surmise was right, but five of the izvoshtchiki refused to drive me, although price had not been mentioned. It was merely that they intended to drive into the centre of Petrograd, and my destination lay more on the outskirts. I got desperate. Cabinet Ministers do not like to be kept waiting, and as I saw no chance of being taken willingly to the island where my appointment was, I had reluctantly to have recourse to the only other means.

"Please," I said to the gendarme at the station, "all these izvoshtchiki refuse to drive me, and I simply must be in Yelagin by ten o'clock. Money is of no consequence, if only I am taken there."

The representative of the law stalked up to the first driver, and simply commanded him to drive me.

"But I don't want to drive there. My horse . . ."

"Off you go, no more words!"

Then, turning to me, "Jump in, lady. Remember, I've taken your number, so don't you give further cause for complaint," were his parting words to the izvoshtchik.

Had I wanted to drive behind a hearse, the pace we drove along would have been perfect, but relentless time was passing and ten o'clock drew nearer and nearer.

All my polite requests for greater speed were ignored, my driver merely murmuring very audibly, "It's too bad that a man should be forced to drive where he

doesn't want to go. There's even no choice left any more."

"Brother," I said, quite gently, "could thy horse not run a little faster? Believe me, I am very sorry to take thee where thou dost not wish to go, but I am on urgent business."

"No, my horse is tired, and who knows how far I may have to drive?"

He was new to Petrograd, and the name of the destination I had mentioned implied nothing to him. We asked a passer-by how far the island of Yelagin was. "Oh just to the left, and then to the right and across the bridge."

Lost was the beauty of the landscape to me. "My friend, I am not driving for pleasure or in order to annoy thee, therefore do be so good as to stop grumbling, and whip thy horse, for the business I am on concerns the welfare of many people, and surely thou dost not wish to make me lose my chance of pleading for them."

At last his ill-humour left him, and the horse, supposed to be utterly exhausted and unable to run, made a wonderful effort, and I was in time.

On the way back, the beauty of the scenery of these famous islands, the show places of Petrograd and the summer palace of the Empress Dowager, began to impress the driver, who was for the first time in these parts. For, since the outbreak of the war, and even now, many izvoshtchiki from occupied or evacuated towns flock into the capital.

"This forest and these meadows, do they all belong to the Empress?" he asked, and he looked admiringly at the big white building and the bright flower

gardens. Then thoughtfully shaking his head, he remarked :

“ Very beautiful, indeed—very beautiful.”

We passed many residences of rich people, and pointing to one of them he said pensively, “ Now, how do these rich people manage not to lose themselves in such big houses ? ”

Then, turning round to me, “ Baryinia, rich people do not believe in God. It is the poor who believe in God. Why is it that the rich do not believe in Him ? ”

My answer evidently satisfied him, but then he added, “ Need and sorrow and want do make one turn to God. But these rich people think they can do without Him—at least, one never sees them in church.” Then, with a fairness of mind, characteristic of the Russian peasant, he added, “ Perhaps they have private chapels, and that's why we don't see them. They tell me that the more learned people get,” he said, “ the less they believe in God—but one cannot do without God, the poor know that.”

“ Neither can the rich and learned,” said I, “ they only think they can.”

The poor old driver and I understood one another perfectly. I paid him handsomely after he had brought me to the nearest tram station. He thanked me warmly. I left him standing near to the Kamenostrovski Bridge, a place where he could easily pick up another fare. As I passed him in the tram, he smiled at me, nodding his head in a friendly way.

CHAPTER XLVI.

IZVOSHTCHIK AND FARE.

ONE day as I drove past the Memorial Church of Alexander II. which stands over the spot where he was killed, my driver turned half round and remarked : " A very beautiful church, very beautiful, but not one to pray in."

Perhaps he is right, for the church is just one blaze of colour and glorious mosaic pictures, but it lacks the atmosphere needed for devotion.

" God rest the soul of that good man, the Emperor," he said ; " he died for us."

" Yes, he was a good man," I replied, and then I added : " I knew him personally when I was a child, and he was always so kind to us children."

" I, too, knew him," said my izvoshtchik eagerly. " I, also, loved him, and he was kind to me."

" It is a nice coincidence that we both knew him," I remarked. " Where did you see him ? "

" I served in the ——— Regiment." (He mentioned some crack Guard Corps, the name of which I have forgotten). " We stood in Pavlovsk and many a time when the Emperor went shooting I had to accompany him, and whenever he had a successful day he gave me money, and also commanded that a big glass of vodka be given me. Yes, he was indeed a very kind man."

When I paid my izvoshtchik, we parted good friends, for had we not both loved the same man—I when a little girl and he when a soldier ?

It seemed one evening as though I should have to spend the night in my friend's house on the Islands, for no *izvoshtchik* could be found anywhere near, and I was too unwell to walk. The servant had been scouring the neighbourhood and twice returned with the news that there were none about. I suggested his walking as far as the tram—some twenty minutes' walk—and going by tram until he came across one of those white ravens—an *izvoshtchik*. At last he returned with one. "He wants two roubles," he remarked.

"Two roubles!" I said, "for a seven minutes' drive?"

However, I had no choice, and as I stepped into the *drosky*, I heard a gentleman who had been my fellow-visitor speak very angrily to my driver.

"Thou rascal, thou knowest that thou hast no right to fix a price in advance, and such a price, too. Two roubles, indeed! I have taken thy number and will denounce thee to the *Gradonatchalnik*, and thou wilt soon hear more about it."

The *izvoshtchik* looked frightened, cowed, and we had hardly driven out of the gates when he turned round to me. "Baryinia, have mercy on me," he said, "if that gentleman denounces me I shall be fined fifty roubles, or get three weeks' imprisonment. Do have pity on me and plead with the *barin* for me. I will drive thee any distance, only do prevent the *barin* from carrying out his threat."

"It was foolish of thee to ask two roubles when thou knowest the law," I remarked, "still I will do my best."

He drew up, I stepped out, and going up to Mr. X., who was walking on the path, I said: "I ask you earnestly not to carry out your threat. The man will drive me two roubles' worth of distance."

"You don't know these rascals as well as I do," he growled; "don't trouble yourself about him. All *izvoshtchiki* know the law, and yet act like this. Two roubles, and that for such a little way!"

"He was fetched from a distance," I interposed. "Honestly, I should feel ever so much happier if you would ignore this matter."

"No, I won't!" replied the irate bureaucrat.

As I got back into the *drosky* I told the man of my futile effort. He looked desperately unhappy and seemed to shrivel up and sink into his coachman's habit.

"Barinka, imagine what it means to pay a fifty rouble fine, or if I go to prison I have to lose my work."

I was genuinely sorry for the poor sinner, and finally hit upon a way out of the difficulty. "Well, drive me as far as the Bolshoi Prospect, and if cited before the *Gradonatchalnik*, call upon me as a witness that you had driven me thus far and that therefore two roubles were not too much."

When we reached our destination and I got out, he looked at me with pleading eyes and said once more: "You will save me, for sure?"

"Yes," I replied. "You must tell the police to ask for the *anglitchanka**, and I gave him my address. Evidently, Mr. X. had not carried out his threat, for I was not cited before the police to plead

*English lady.

the cause of the poor fellow. I hope, however, that the fright he received may restrain him for a while from asking exorbitant prices.

I had felt much distressed by Mr. X.'s manner ; it seemed *infra dig* to speak so crossly to an izvoshtchik, but I was soon to have a worse exhibition of the fare's manner towards his driver. Indeed, a bitter war seems to be going on between the izvoshtchiki and the public. I realised that there are faults on both sides and that the izvoshtchik is not always the sinner.

My friend's motor had not turned up. "That is how we are served at present," he said ; "the independence and impertinence of these chauffeurs is beyond words ! I'm sorry, we shall have to go by tram."

At the terminus on the very outskirts of the town we got out, and as we had a further distance to go we looked for an izvoshtchik, but all that we could see was one driverless drosky.

"Get in," he said to me, "and I will fetch the izvoshtchik." Close by was a small shop, and the driver was seen talking to the man behind the counter.

"Izvoshtchik !" my friend called out.

"I'm engaged," he replied.

"You are to come immediately."

"But I——"

"No words. Drive us at once !"

"But, Your Excellency ——"

My friend was in uniform, his chest decorated with orders. The izvoshtchik had stepped nearer.

"Drive on !" impatiently commanded the annoyed Excellency. Sullenly the man climbed on his coach

seat, took the reins, and off we jolted. "Thou rascal! Thou miscreant!" my host went on saying; "thou requirest to be taught a lesson. I ought to notify thy number to the police for refusing to drive me." I felt terribly shy and uncomfortable. My life in England had made me sensitive, and I knew that none of my British acquaintances would have spoken to a cabby or, indeed, to anyone in such a way. Perhaps His Excellency felt my embarrassment, for he began to make excuses for his high-handed manner. "These izvoshtchiki are all rascals; they are getting too independent and impertinent."

The whole distance of our drive was hardly a mile. We jolted over the awful pavement, the much-abused driver having collapsed into himself. On arrival at our destination, my friend said in quite a polite voice to the izvoshtchik: "Well, now, come on, tell me why didst thou refuse to drive me?"

"Your Excellency," he replied meekly, "I was not free to do so; I had been engaged by the shop-keeper to fetch his goods for him." The Excellency paid him handsomely.

"Drive back quickly and thou wilt yet be able to keep thy promise to him," he said, handing the driver the money.

I said nothing, but I thought much.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE ALEXANDER NEVSKI LAVRA.

PEACE and quiet reigned within the precincts of the Alexander Nevski Monastery. Only the sound of footsteps broke the silence, when suddenly the great bells of this most sacred monastery of Petrograd began to ring. How the sound of church bells belongs to Russia! The fine chimes and deep heavy boom are to the outer world what the voices of the choir are inside the building.

This Sunday morning the worshippers were mostly soldiers. On the one side of the centre aisle stood wounded men, on the other, healthy, sturdy Cossacks. A few sleek, comfortable tradesmen entered the church, and as I went up nearer to the altar, I found there an ordinary congregation of men, women and children. The choir chanted its lovely music. The deep bass of the Archdeacon rang out, "Let us pray to the Lord," the silver bell voices of the boys chimed the reply, "Lord have mercy upon us." The service continued, and Cossack and peaceful citizen were worshipping in whole-hearted devotion.

Suddenly, the voice of the celebrating Bishop, a venerable old man, broke in upon the chanting, and in simple words, in a voice vibrating with emotion, he spoke the prayer for the war. We all knelt down, and the bowed figures of the soldiers and the prostrated figures of men and women were the outward expression of an inward attitude. The Bishop's voice rose

in fervour, as, free from intoning or monotoning, he prayed for the wounded and the sick, for the gallant army, for the Allies—for a blessing on the nation, for good to come out of all the sorrow and suffering.

Then the choir began to chant a psalm, and as I looked upward my eyes fell upon a gallery on which the more than life-sized marble figures of the Twelve Apostles were represented, all sitting in various positions, all, however, were turning towards the chancel, and appeared to be listening intently. For nigh two hundred years these figures have sat there, a symbol of the people who come to the sanctuary, to listen to the voices of boys and men, either calling to prayer or singing praises, and the beautiful acoustic properties of the church allow even the softest tones to float through its spaces, reaching every corner.

To the left of the sanctuary stands a sarcophagus of Alexander Nevski, warrior and saint, in fact, the patron saint of Petrograd. Some seven hundred years ago he fought the famous battle on the Neva, where he defeated Sweden, then Russia's most bitter enemy. The effigy of the warrior and a few of his bones lie in the heavy silver coffin, and at both sides, worked in silver, are his standard and armour, and above it all, the bright, glowing image of that young and knightly Grand Duke of whom it was said, when he died, that "the sun had set for Russia."

Alexander Nevski lived during the terrible years of the first Mongol invasion, and in order to save his dear people of Novgorod the Great, he visited the court of the haughty and imperious Tartar Khan. He interceded for his subjects when on earth. Surely, so says the pious Russian, he is still interceding for us



ALEXANDER NEVSKI.

to-day. Therefore, crowds come to his shrine, and anxious wives ask for his intercession on behalf of their beloved ones out on the battlefield.

When Peter the Great founded his new capital, he had the relics of the victor of the battle on the Neva brought to the city on that river. The town has, however, developed in other directions ; not therefore in the centre, but in the outskirts of the busy capital lies the premier sanctuary of Petrograd—the Alexander Nevski Lavra. An atmosphere of quiet surrounds the Cathedral. The green lawns are intersected by avenues of quaintly grown birch trees. All along the big square are buildings, the cells of the monks and the house of the Metropolitan. In three corners of the quadrangle are churches, the fourth, although to all appearance also a church, is in reality the monastic museum. Here stands the model of the Cathedral as originally planned. Here is the bed on which Peter the Great used to sleep, and the portable folding chapel of the Empress Elizabeth, also the chair of Catherine the Great. In glass cupboards hang costly vestments, and in glass cases lie wonderful carvings, and every space on the wall is hung with old ikons. Most things belong to the remote past of Russian life, except the new cope given to the Metropolitan who had crowned four emperors.

Opposite the entrance to the Cathedral is a doorway to the Metropolitan's dwelling, and every day during the winter and three times a week during the summer, from two to four, the Vladyka holds a reception, and even the poorest person is free to enter. I had come to ask for permission to visit the library, and was thus able to watch the new Metropolitan

Pitirim receive his guests. I saw a gentle-looking, kindly old man, in white monk's garb, listening with genuine sympathy to the stammered-out story of a young invalid officer, who was evidently in need of pecuniary help. There sat an important looking cleric, to whom I was later on introduced—a Bishop from a distant diocese. There, too, was a big financier, who evidently needed the influence of the Church to carry out his undertaking, which, he told me, was to further the Anglo-Russian Alliance.

It was all so human and simple. The old man holding a whispered conversation with his secretary as to what to give the invalid; the quick, energetic and gracious manner with which he turned to me. I found in him a man intent on helping the people, deeply interested in the welfare of the soldiers and prisoners of war, accessible to everyone who sought his advice or help.*

Next I visited the librarian, and he told me of the life of the monks, of their work and occupation, and also of their sources of income. Thus I found out that the revenue had been chiefly derived from the sale of burial ground in the famous cemetery which belongs to the monastery, but also from the rents of great warehouses on the riverside close by.

Later, as I drove past these, I saw pile upon pile of bags of flour being unloaded, and I thought, "What a symbol! Surely such a sanctuary ought to provide food, spiritual food, to the masses."

As I walked out of the precincts of the Cathedral

*He has been deposed and put into punitive seclusion in a monastery. It appears that he was a supporter of Rasputin and one of the wielders of dark forces.

Square, I entered a cemetery which lies on both sides of the path as one passes through the gate of the famous Lavra. There I discovered the graves of most of Russia's musicians, Moussorgsky, Dragomyishski, Glinka, Borodin and Tchaikovsky. There also lay Russia's first literary lights, Lomonossov, Karamsin, Joukovsky, Kryilov, as well as some modern writers, greatest among them Dostoyevski. I had the feeling as if the cemetery were a Russian Westminster Abbey. When I asked the gatekeeper whether the illustrious men had been buried there by invitation of the monastic authorities, he replied curtly, "What does the Lavra care for music or letters?"

"For music, surely it cares," I replied, "seeing how it is rendered in the Cathedral."

There within the precincts of the Lavra meet past and present, life and death, youth and age, and the visitor to this sanctuary of Petrograd's Patron Saint will carry away with him a living picture of the Cathedral and the silver sarcophagus of the brave warrior-saint Alexander Nevski, of wounded soldiers who to-day have borne the brunt of the battle, of the venerable Metropolitan, and of the little children who play so merrily in the shady paths of the quadrangle, of the cemetery with its graves of famous musicians, whose works are giving delight to all lovers of music, and who, perhaps, more than anyone else have given to the world a revelation of the riches and tenderness of Russia's soul.

Warrior-saint, clerics, poets, musicians, soldiers and children, they all belong to the Lavra of Alexander Nevski.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

BOOKS AND PICTURES.

It was outside the little monastic bookshop, close to the gates of the Alexander Nevski Lavra, that I saw pasted to the wall rows of crudely coloured pictures of Scripture subjects.

"Can you sell me one of those pictures on which souls going into hell are shewn?" I said to the saleswoman, but before she could answer, a customer standing by remarked with a scowl: "Yes, indeed—souls. Everything is being taken from us, soon our very souls will be demanded."

I presumed all his sons had been taken into the Army—hence his crossness. The saleswoman, however, said with a smile: "You wish a picture of the Last Judgment. There is a great demand for this particular subject and the sale of this picture has gone up. The war is making people think of death," she added.

I looked at various pictures, brightly coloured and popular, such as the people love to buy.

"Have you the Akaphist to the Saviour?" I asked. "Yes, and here it is."

She handed me a small booklet which had been recommended to me as containing beautiful hymns of praise to Our Lord. I was glad to find at last what I had vainly sought for in other places. As I bade the woman farewell, I told her that I hoped to translate

these prayers into English. She looked very pleased at this, and, true to my intentions, I have translated some of these hymns of praise, which all end with the refrain "Hallelujah."

In Heaven Angels are unceasingly praising Thy Holy Name,
O Jesus.

Holy, holy, holy, they sing.

But we sinners on earth with mortal lips are singing—
Hallelujah.

By Thy Divine Blood Thou didst redeem us of old,

From the curse of the law, O Jesus.

Deliver us now, from the net in which the serpent has
caught us,

By passion of flesh, impure desire and evil
suggestions.

Us, who sing unto Thee—Hallelujah.

Hearing Thee pass by, O Lord,

The blind man called out—

Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy upon me !

Enlighten Thou now, O Jesus, the eyes of my
heart,

Who sing to Thee—Hallelujah.

Seeing the widow weeping, O Jesus,

When her son was being carried to burial,

Thou didst pity her, raising her son from the dead.

So now, O Lord, have pity on me,

And raise Thou my soul dead in sin,

And I will sing—Hallelujah.

With power from on High Thou didst endow the Apostles,

So also now, O Lord, clothe me

With the warmth of Thy Holy Spirit,

Me, who am naked,

And give me to sing with love unto Thee—Hallelujah.

CHAPTER XLIX.

CONTENTED HEROES.

TRUE to my promise I revisited the barracks of the Tcherkasski Regiment, especially as the Lieut.-Colonel had extended a hearty invitation to me to come to see my men whenever I liked. This time I had hoped to bring the Metropolitan with me, for I had told him about our brave men, and found that he was much interested in the fate of the prisoners of war. Apparently he had had heated arguments with General Khabaloff over this matter—the latter's idea being that no man had the right to become a prisoner, and also that there might be spies among the men.* Although I waited for quite a long time, the kindly old man did not turn up. However, on my return home I found a telephone message to the effect that he greatly regretted having failed me, but he had been kept at the Synod.

While I was waiting in the street outside the barracks in company with the wives and sweethearts who had come to see the soldiers during visiting hours, some of my men came up. They stopped and talked to me. All were in uniform, looking happy and contented. I went along with them to the barracks, but at the

*“ Surely if God was willing to spare Sodom and Gomorrah for the sake of ten righteous, hundreds of men ought not to be left to suffer for ten unrighteous.” These were the Metropolitan's words to me as we discussed the plight of the soldiers escaped from captivity.

gate the sentinel challenged me. My companions, however, said with a grand air, "*She* can pass."

Inside I was soon surrounded by a number of my protégés, who told me that they were well-fed, well-housed, and in every way well cared for; but they had still one great grievance—not one of them had as yet been granted leave.

"If they will not send us home on furlough, why can't they send us back to the trenches?" some of them remarked.

"We have escaped on purpose to serve our country again, and not to idle our time away."

An officer came up to us, and recognising me as the lady who had accompanied the Prince, volunteered to show me over the barracks. I expressed my admiration at the order and tidiness which prevailed.

The officer seemed very gratified. "Yes," he replied, "we do try to keep things clean," then, turning to one of the men, he pointed to a cigarette end on the floor and commanded him with severity not to let such a thing happen again.

"We do all we can to make your friends happy," he said to me; "we take parties of them to the Zoological Gardens and Museums, and as we have not yet received any orders with regard to them, I am going to ask permission to give them daily drill."

"Which official is responsible for the men who have escaped from Germany?" I asked.

"General Belyaeff,"* he replied; "but he is in France at present."

"And will these men have to wait till he comes back?" I queried.

*This general has also been imprisoned since the Revolution.

"That I cannot say," the officer answered, adding wearily, "but I do wish I could get some definite orders as to what is to be done with them."

I thanked him for his kindness in showing me round; then, sitting on a bench in the yard I talked with my soldiers.

They informed me that at six o'clock on the night before I brought the Prince to Ochta, they had been ordered off to the Kalinkin Brewery (I had been at General Khabaloff's at 4 o'clock), but that when they arrived there the Commander of that *Depôt* had said to them, "My children, you are heroes, and on no account must you stay here, where only the riff-raff of the Army is sent." He sent them on to Ochta on his own responsibility.

I informed the men that the Metropolitan Pitirim was their friend, that he intended paying them a visit; also that anyone who liked might go and see him from 3 to 4 o'clock three afternoons a week. "I will be sure to go and see him," said one young soldier.

"Sestrizta!" exclaimed another one suddenly, his face all aglow with joy, "Her Majesty the Empress is going to come and review us."

"I am very glad to hear of it," I replied, "for that is just what I had asked her to do, and she promised to make your cause her own. Brothers," I said, on bidding them good-bye, "although I am leaving for England, remember that you have always a good friend in the wife of the English Ambassador."*

*How they profited by my suggestion may be judged from the fact that by February six thousand of them had visited the British Embassy, and come away enriched by clothing for their wives and children and shirts for themselves.

The dear men looked at me with affection beaming out of their eyes, shook me warmly by the hand : " You are as dear to us as our own souls," were their parting words.

CHAPTER L.

FUNERAL PROCESSIONS.

THERE was evidently a breakdown of trams, for I had to wait quite half an hour before one came along. I was standing on the Sredni Prospect, about a mile from the Smolenski Cemetery, and although it was early, several funerals passed me, of which three followed in quick succession.

The first funeral cortége included one mourner only. The mere skeleton of a horse, which was drawing the most primitive of hearses, was trotting along instead of going at funeral pace. A half-grown lad sat negligently in front of the coffin ; to him it was all the same at what pace his horse went—it was just a job to be done. Not so for the poor, elderly woman who, unable to keep pace easily with the hearse, was clutching it with one hand and was thus half dragged, half tripping, after the coffin of some beloved. It was pathetic to watch that struggling figure. The solitary mourner's face expressed merely physical discomfort—but could one expect anything else under these conditions ?

The miserable horse had just turned round the corner when another equally poor funeral came along. Again the simplest of carriages and the cheapest of coffins. Behind it walked six poorly-clad girls—probably they were burying a comrade, a fellow toiler. Only one of the girls had a black jacket on—the others were wearing ordinary coloured frocks. It is difficult enough for the well-to-do to buy mourning at present, and impossible for the poor to do so.

My tram was not yet in sight when a third funeral approached—a white hearse drawn by horses in white trappings and plumes. The white coffin was profusely covered with wreaths, and quite a number of well-dressed mourners were walking behind. There was the usual sight of the few sad-faced relations, and behind them—as if graduated after the measure of their grief—friends and acquaintances. The latter were talking of all sorts of things, their looks expressing no sorrow. The procession was closed by a few empty carriages. In Russia everybody who is able to walk follows the hearse on foot, whatever the distance, and carriages are there merely for the homeward drive.

I observed that every *izvoshtchik* who happened to drive past the coffin made the sign of the Cross—otherwise no one seemed to take much notice of the funerals—too common a sight in that part of Petrograd.

Frequently I had heard soldiers singing as they marched through the streets, and they march to their song with a swing. Perhaps one man starts a song, a few others take up the melody, and very soon the whole party are singing in harmony, but never had I

seen soldiers marching to the strains of a band. Therefore, I was naturally greatly interested to know what was the occasion when one day the sound of military music reached me as I was driving along the Morskaya.

Just as we neared the St. Isaac's Cathedral we overtook a military band, which formed the rear of a long procession. "What is this," I asked my driver. "A military funeral," was his reply. We overtook the procession, and as we drove slowly past the cortège I caught sight of four hearses. Behind each walked a group of relations and friends followed by a detachment of soldiers. Four officers of the same regiment were thus being conveyed to their last resting-place.

In my mind there will be now for ever linked with Russian military music the picture of that solemn military funeral procession as it wended its way past the stately Cathedral.

It was near the quay, close to the statue of Peter the Great that, a few days later, I watched the funeral cortège of some high military official. A large number of officers of all ranks were walking behind the elegant hearse, which was drawn by eight horses, at the usual pace of a funeral. Here was the extreme opposite to the humble procession I had seen some days before, when the lonely mourner, doing her best to keep up with the ill-fed horse, was hurried along at a speed unseemly for the last sad pilgrimage.

CHAPTER LI.

SIDELIGHTS.

It would have been exceedingly interesting could I have had a gramophone to catch all the remarks made to me. That record would have been very valuable for future days.

Those were anxious days for the Allied Diplomats. Sazonoff, the Foreign Minister, had been forced to resign, owing to intrigues.

"He was bought by England," someone said to me.

"It is through the influence of Rasputin and the young Empress that Sazonoff has had to go. They want peace and he is in the way," said another.

A certain section of Russian society which, without being pro-German was anti-war, seemed very pleased with the appointment of his successor, Stuermer. One of these people told me with genuine pleasure and satisfaction: "Stuermer has been chosen because he knows nothing whatever of diplomacy, and when it comes to peace proposals, he will be quite unhampered by diplomatic finesse, and with sound commonsense will go straight ahead."

"Oh, I see," I replied; "he is to be an illustration of the British proverb: 'Fools rush in where angels fear to tread'!"

"Stuermer is so ignorant of foreign politics that when asked questions in Council, his replies have to

be handed to him surreptitiously on slips of paper," said someone else less enchanted by the choice of Foreign Minister.

Yet another informed me that "all Monsieur Stuermer had ever done was to arrange precedence at Court functions in his capacity of Chamberlain."

* * *

"I cannot see what we are going to gain by this war," said the wife of a renowned doctor to me. "We are told that we are to throw off German domination, but so far as I can judge, we are only going to exchange if for the British yoke." Her remark annoyed me very much, for it showed how insidiously pro-German propaganda, or, should I say, anti-British propaganda, was being carried out.

* * *

"So after all you have become Minister, and yet you said you wanted to retire from public work." With these words I greeted one of the members of the re-constructed Cabinet. "Permit me to congratulate you."

"Really, there is nothing much in being a Minister," he replied deprecatingly; "to-day one is in office, next week one is out."*

I felt very sorry to hear him speak thus, for surely if Russian Ministers think so lightly of their position and always sit loosely in the saddle, they cannot have a strong feeling of responsibility towards the nation.

*In fact, during the last ten years there have been about eighty changes of Ministers.

In this particular case my acquaintance was entering upon most arduous duties, as his predecessor had made a terrible muddle of things.

* * *

“ My dear, *do* be careful ; you might get into such difficulties with the Police.” The speaker was an old friend of my parents.

“ I hardly think so,” I replied, “ for at present my time is spent in visiting Cabinet Ministers.”

“ Still, I must beg you to be careful, for quite a number of people have recently vanished, and in one case it was fully three months before we were able to trace the whereabouts of a certain lady. People have been taken up by the Police at a moment’s notice. I often have to enquire into such cases, as it is my duty to deal with the petitions which are presented to Her Majesty, the Empress Dowager. . . .”

* * *

“ I cannot believe that the Germans are as bad as they are painted,” said a haggard, sad-eyed woman, a mechanic’s wife who had been a lady’s maid in her younger days. “ We know so many of them who have country houses in this place, and they are all so nice and kind.”

“ Annushka,” I replied, “ the people you have in mind are not real Germans, in spite of their German names and Protestant Faith. Their families have been for generations in Russia ; they have become Russian in heart and mind, and have, in course of time, assimilated all that is best from the Russian people. These

people are quite different from the Germans of Germany, by whom they are called Russians."

My explanation of the problem which had so perplexed her, seemed to satisfy the good woman.

* * *

Everybody was grumbling against the Government. Long lists of misdeeds were pointed out to me and incidents of gross mismanagement quoted. One case called forth special resentment. The Government had issued the order that no calves were to be killed. Now, as it happened, a large consignment of veal had just been delivered in Petrograd, and instead of letting this meat be sold, the letter of the law had to be fulfilled and thousands of pounds of good meat left to rot, while there was none for the people to buy.

"Will you believe me," said a lady, "I have just been asked forty roubles (£4) for a ham. Rather much for any pocket. . . ."

"I often have to go hungry," said a cousin of mine, "for the portions in the Vegetarian Restaurant are so small that even three courses are not sufficient to satisfy one. Once a week, however, I go to the Army and Navy Co-operative Stores and permit myself the luxury of a good beef-steak. . . ."

"Soon we shall not know what to buy for food," said another friend who was quite well off, "everything is so dear. Imagine, the whortleberries we used to buy for 5 kopeks (1¼d.) now cost 40 kopeks, and one tomato costs 20 kopeks. . . ."

"How much did you give for your boots?" This question was asked me so frequently that I began to

feel quite conscious of my foot-gear. "We cannot buy any under 50 roubles (£5) the pair. . . ."

"What is a poor woman to do for boots?" said the old servant, looking ruefully down at her feet. "I used to pay 1 rouble 40 kopeks for these cloth boots, and now I cannot get them under 6 roubles. As to leather ones, even the poorest cannot buy them under 16 roubles."

"I will send you a pair from England," I said to comfort her. My offer greatly delighted her, and she let me make a drawing of the sole of her boot.

* * *

We had been discussing the food difficulty and the general state of muddle, when one lady suddenly said: "It is by order of the Government that food is being kept back."

"But for what reason?" I asked with surprise.

"Oh, in order to bring about rioting," she replied quite solemnly; "for it is generally believed there is a secret clause in the agreement between the Allies that any one Power is free to conclude a separate peace in case of internal disturbances."

"Surely that is wild talk," I retorted.

"Oh, no, it is not so," she persisted. "Believe me, the police are doing their best to bring about disturbances, and that would suit the pro-German element down to the ground."

* * *

"What do you think about the war?" I asked a workman.

"Well, what should I think about it?" he growled

out surlily. "What good will it do us peasants? It will not procure us any more land—no more than we got after the Japanese War. . . . * And we had been so sure more land would be given us then! What kind of Government is it we have! It is not enough that our men are sent against the enemy with insufficient weapons, but while they are being killed off, the Government is introducing yellow people as workmen, who work for less wages than we Russians do. Don't speak to me of the war," he said with annoyance and finality in his voice, turning away and shoving wood under a boiler in which water was being boiled in readiness for the troops who were due at that station.

* * *

One of the remarks which amused me greatly was uttered by a pro-German lady whose grievances against the Government were, on the whole, justified—this one was distinctly diverting.

"What have we come to?" she said with a deep sigh and a shake of the head, "that the wife of an English clergyman has to come all the way to Russia to explain things to our Cabinet Ministers!"

*"Land," that is the one cry of the peasant.

CHAPTER LII.

GRUMBLERS.

I MET many people who were perpetually grumbling and groaning over the dislocation produced by the war, and they were astonished to hear from me that the same phenomena are apparent in England. I must admit that it gave me a certain satisfaction to tell these grumblers that in England people complained of exactly the same evils, so that the Russians have no need to feel that theirs is the one and only imperfect country in the world.*

There is one thing, however, about which no one in Russia grumbled, and that was drunkenness. Russia is ahead, surely, of all other nations, in that there are at present no drunkards to be seen among her 168,000,000 people. It is a sober nation which will win the war.

What about afterwards? "If there is no vodka to be had we can do without," a peasant said to me, "but if it is again within our reach we shall drink it as before."

It will indeed require great skill of statesmanship to solve the problem raised so frequently by thoughtful Russians as to what substitute for vodka can be given

*Naturally everything is on a larger scale in Russia, proportionate to her vast territory and her immense population. Conditions are also more aggravated owing to the complicated machinery of administration, whereby "ordre et contre-ordre" lead to the proverbial "désordre."

to the people, for the abolition of vodka by the Emperor, and the prohibition of the sale of wines and beer by the municipalities, are merely temporary war measures.

CHAPTER LIII.

THE KAZAN CATHEDRAL IN PETROGRAD.

It was Saturday afternoon—time for Evensong—I asked my driver to stop at the Kazan Cathedral while I went in for a few moments of quiet. He did so willingly, and passing several women with collecting boxes—for refugees, feeding centres, the wounded, etc.—I entered this famous Sanctuary which stands off the busiest thoroughfare of Petrograd—the Nevski Prospect. With its colonnade of pillars the Kazan Cathedral reminds one of St. Peter's in Rome, with this difference, that it is not placed in haughty loneliness, but in the very midst of Petrograd's life, in the centre of commerce and trade, of work and pleasure.

It is not merely because the Cathedral happens to stand on the way of passers-by that there are always many worshippers inside the building, but chiefly owing to the sacredness of the famous ikon of the "Mother of God of Kazan," which the Cathedral contains. The devout people believe it to have miraculous power, and therefore come to pray before it at all times.

The first appearance of this "miraculous" ikon is linked with the conquest of Kazan under Ivan the Terrible, in the sixteenth century, and also with the conversion of the Moslem Kazan Tartars. The miracles attributed to the ikon spread its fame throughout the length and breadth of Russia, and therefore it is hardly to be wondered at that Peter the Great had the image brought to his new capital, where he built a chapel for it. It was under Alexander I., however, that the present cathedral was built, and dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, "the Mother of God of Kazan."

On the outside walls of this beautiful building are eighteen inscriptions of texts in large bronze gilded letters, some weighing as much as fifteen poods each.* The texts are chosen from the Magnificat and other verses dealing with the Blessed Virgin. Over the doors are verses from the Psalms, such as, "Enter his gates with praise." On the Eastern side of the wall is a large ikon of the Virgin with the Child. All around the Cathedral, as well as over the entrance to the colonnade, are beautiful bas-reliefs, representing scenes from the life of our Lord, the largest of which is over the apse, in which stands the chief altar, and depicts the entry of Christ into Jerusalem. In niches stand the figures of John the Baptist, St. Andrew (whom the Russians claim as their special Apostle), Saint Vladimir, the Christianiser of Russia, and Alexander Nevski, the Patron Saint of Petrograd.

The big gates of this Cathedral are an exact copy of the beautiful gates of the Cathedral of Florence.

Within the building there is an atmosphere of homely devoutness, an atmosphere much less solemn than that

*A pood is 36lbs.

prevailing in the vast and stately Cathedral of St. Isaac's. This difference may be due also to the fact that this Church is closely linked with the nation's history, especially with the Napoleonic War. For instance, within this Cathedral lies buried the famous old Prince Koutousov-Smolenski, the Broussilof of that invasion, and the beautiful Ikonistas, the screen of the Sanctuary, is also a memento of that war, as well as a token of the devotion displayed by the Don Cossacks. In the year 1812, those troops took from the French many hundredweights of silver which the latter had robbed from German churches, and by the Cossacks' request, Field-Marshal Koutousov wrote to the Metropolitan of Petrograd that the Cossacks, in sending him this silver, "were thereby returning to God what had been stolen from Sanctuaries devoted to Him."

The great general also passed on the express wish of the Cossacks, that statues of the four Evangelists be made of this silver and placed in the Cathedral.

The devout soldiers did not realise what perplexity their request would bring the architect, for the Church was ready—everything had been planned carefully—and, therefore, it was impossible to find place anywhere for the four Evangelists, and yet the wish of the brave Cossacks demanded consideration.

Before anything could be decided upon the Emperor Alexander went abroad. Events followed rapidly upon one another—great issues were being decided, and, therefore, it was not until 1824 that the question of the Cossack silver was again brought to the Emperor's notice, the suggestion being to place the unwelcome Evangelists in the cupola.

The Emperor died before this latter plan was definitely passed, and the matter of the Don Cossack silver was again shelved. It was some ten years later that by the order of the Emperor Nicholas I. the silver was at last utilised, not for making figures of the four Evangelists, but for the Ikonistas. This framework for holding the sacred ikon forms the screen which divides the Sanctuary from the body of the Church.

The weight of the silver, which the pious Cossacks had dedicated to the Cathedral, was 1,520 poods, and though the quantity was so great, the artists to whom the execution of this costly frame was entrusted required eighty more poods. Even that did not prove sufficient, and by the time the Ikonistas was completed, it had taken three thousand poods (about 48 tons av.).

This costly frame contains the most sacred images, particularly that of the Virgin of Kazan, which has been lavishly decorated by the devout people with such a wealth of expensive jewels and gems, that it represents the value of a hundred thousand roubles (£10,000).

As I walked from shrine to shrine, I came up to a large crucifix, very beautifully worked, standing by itself in a niche. Underneath was the inscription: "This Golgotha has been erected as a memorial of the miraculous event of October 1888."

Unable to remember for the moment what this event was, I asked one of the Church officials what had happened at that date. He looked at me with unfeigned surprise, and uttered merely one word—"Borki."



THE KAZAN CATHEDRAL IN PETROGRAD.



INTERIOR, IKON OF THE MOTHER OF GOD.

Face p. 216.

Of course ! It all came back to me in a flash—the excitement when the news reached the capital that an attempt had been made on the Emperor Alexander III.—a bomb having been put on the railway line. Part of the Imperial train had been blown up. One of the eye-witnesses of this accident told us a few days later of the Emperor's wonderful presence of mind, and of his gigantic strength, thanks to which he was able to hold up the roof of the railway carriage with his shoulders, and thereby save the Empress from being crushed. That same friend also told us how one of the Imperial children had been thrown into a field through the force of the explosion, and that when someone came to pick her up, the frightened little Imperial personage had called out pitifully, " Oh, do not kill me, please do not kill me ! " Indeed, Borki had been a miraculous event, and a loving people had gladly responded to Count Heiden's appeal to put up a memorial.

Until the centenary of the great deliverance from the invasion of Napoleon four years ago, many of the special treasures and trophies of that war had been kept in the Kazan Cathedral, but in 1912 these were transported to Moscow.

Among these trophies were flags and standards—eleven were German ones—Prussian, Bavarian, Saxon, and Westphalian. Somehow one feels that it would be very nice if also at the present time such flags could be taken from the enemy.

Among the most cherished trophies and treasures kept in the Cathedral were the keys of eight fortresses and seventeen towns. How happy the hearts of the Russian soldiers would be if to-day they in their

turn could get the keys of these same towns—Aix-la-Chapelle, Dresden, Leipzig, Cassel, Cologne, Lübeck, Hamburg and Bremen—were this the case there would be little chance for the German Fleet to do mischief either in the Baltic or elsewhere. How gladly, however, on the other hand, would the Russians be could they return to the Belgians the keys of Mons and Namur.

Thus the Kazan Cathedral of Petrograd has been closely linked with that great national event, the Napoleonic Invasion, and it is only natural that the people should to-day go and pray in that Church, for is not Russia again invaded by a ruthless foe?

CHAPTER LIV.

A FAREWELL VISIT.

BEFORE my departure for Kiev, Count Olsoufieff had informed me that he had been sent for by the Tsar, evidently to report on his journey to the Allied countries. In fact there seemed to be a perpetual going of Ministers and other men to Headquarters—"Stafka," as it was called. The Count also intended going on to Kiev and hoped that I would wait for him there. This was, however, impossible, and consequently, to my great regret, I did not see him again

before leaving for England. I looked out in vain for him at Mogilev, our trains passing each other.

When I went to pay my farewell visit to the Minister of Justice, I was asked to wait as he had not yet arrived at his office. This time it was in the Chief Office of the Police that I had to spend half an hour, and my thoughts were involuntarily drawn to the many unhappy people whose fate was in the hands of the Police. I felt truly thankful that I sat there as a British subject, and also that, in days gone by, when I was still a Russian subject, I had never come into close quarters with this dread department.

Various officials began to drop in in a very leisurely manner, as if there were no hurry in this world. At last I was asked to step into the study of the Minister, who was so kindly receiving me at this early hour instead of letting me wait for his regular reception day. He greeted me with a smile.

"I am so happy that Mr. Khvostoff has liberated 120 exiles," I said.

"Did I not tell you," he replied, "that we are very glad to do all in our power to help? I told you so, and you see so far as I am concerned, I know what British opinion and feeling is on this point. I knew the late Mr. Stead and had many a talk with him."

I then related to Mr. Makaroff my interesting experiences of the last few days, and of my visit to Mogilev; then I added: "I am to see Mr. Stuermer, who is going in a few days to headquarters, and I will ask him to bring the question of the amnesty at once before His Majesty."

"I too am going there very soon," the Minister

said, interrupting me, "and I also will lay this matter before His Majesty."

I was amused at this eagerness, for he and his colleagues were known to hold extreme reactionary views; but at the same time I saw in this compliance a desire to please the British Ally.

Our talk was practical, and he assured me that the matter of the revision had been put in hand.

"But it cannot be done in a few days," were his parting words.

CHAPTER LV.

A TELEPHONIC CONVERSATION.

THE evening before my departure from Petrograd I rang up one of my new acquaintances in the Ministry of the Interior to say farewell. "You must write down your impressions," he said through the telephone. "You have been everywhere and you have seen everybody."

"Oh, yes, I will do so."

"Please send me a copy."

"I do not think I can do that—not at present at any rate."

Then he said: "I want to ask you something. Can you tell me whether the British people will want to remain friends with Russia once the war is over?"

"Of course they will," I replied ; " you have no idea how keen they are on Russia."

" I do know that, but we also know that British friendship can only be retained if we introduce reforms."

" There you are right ; in England ones does expect changes for the better after the war."

" It will be a long time before Russia will be able to stand alone," he remarked, " and it is better for her to be under British than German influence."

Encouraged by this sympathetic attitude I made use of my opportunity and said to my invisible friend at the other end of the telephone : " There are many things which should be introduced into Russian political life—for instance, the responsibility of Ministers."

" That won't come for ages, for our Ministers only think of grasping after power and of keeping it when they have got it."

" Then there is Poland. Why does not the Russian Government speak out plainly as to its intentions ? Germany and Austria on their side are promising so much."

" I know," he said, with genuine regret in his voice

" Now I want to ask you one more thing," I said. " I am told that the Jews are Russia's bitter enemies."

" Yes, so they are, and everywhere they are making things difficult for us with regard to foreign loans."

" Then would it not be much better for Russia to satisfy the demands of the Jews and enjoy their friendship, than to keep them from their rights and privileges and suffer from their enmity ? "

“ So it would, but the Jewish question is a very complicated one.”

Surely this was a strange conversation to be carried on over the telephone ; but I was glad to have my say, and to find that my partner at the other end of the line was in full sympathy with Reform ideas.

It was a hopeful sign that among the younger officials even of the Ministry of the Interior there were men with liberal ideas.

CHAPTER LVI.

AN INTERRUPTED JOURNEY.

THE day I arrived in Petrograd from England I had to give in my passport to the chief dvornik who “ inscribed ” me at the nearest Police Station, and each time I left Petrograd he handed the passport back to me. A few days before my departure for England, I said to the hall porter : “ Please tell the chief dvornik to let me have my passport, I am leaving on Wednesday.”

“ Sloushayas,” was the prompt reply, which means “ Your orders shall be carried out.”

The next day the passport was duly handed to me.

It is not so simple just now to leave Petrograd ; the luggage has to be handed in at the Finnish Railway Station between 8 and 11 p.m. on the eve of departure ;

the custom officers search through every trunk, examine the books, look at every picture postcard, and will let pass only those on which nothing is written. My cousin very kindly did this business for me, and to be on the safe side, took my passport with him. "Everything is in order" he was told, and the next day at an early hour we left the house, and as no *izvoshtchiki* were about, took the workmen's tram. My friend who was going to travel with me, met me at the station. I bade a last farewell to my kindly cousin and host, and then the train started.

My heart was too full for speech, and standing at the window, I looked out on the country. The sky was cloudy, but suddenly part of a lovely rainbow appeared with its fair arch thrown across the clouds. To me it was a symbol—for on the dark sky of Russian national life, acts of justice and clemency would be like a rainbow—the promise of a better day. But was it to be merely a little bit of a rainbow, and not the full glorious arch?

Half an hour later our train passed Pargalovo. To the right was a chain of low hills on which stood peasant houses, which formed the original village, and small wooden houses—*datchas*—inhabited during the summer months by families from the capital. To the left was a vast stretch of moorland.

How it all came back to me as I looked at the broad expanse. The mad rides accompanied by the chivalrous cousins—the exhilarating gallop, with its sudden interruption because the saddle had twisted round. What fun we had on these rides—I and the boys. Where are they now? The one a prisoner of war in

Germany ; the other a plodding official doing honest work in far away Turkestan.

The train was nearing Levashovo. For the last time I looked at the scenery so deeply impressed on my memory, for were not childhood's happy days spent in that beautiful spot ? My friend stood beside me at the window and to her I pointed out the places of special interest. There on that slope we used to find the best lilies of the valley and Solomon's seals ; in that clearance we found mamura and the blossom of the cranberry, and there, under those trees grew *pyrola uniflora* and sweet-scented orchids, and deeper in the forest, on soft cushions of moss, the delicate *Linea Borealis*. The meadows past which our train was gliding were intersected by ditches, and there flashed into my mind our mischievous delight when one particular governess proved herself utterly incapable of jumping across them.

Timid governesses and those who loved to take walks on high roads or smooth paths had a bad time with us. Those fared well, however, who enjoyed doing what we loved to do. They would go through the forest "to hunt for toadstools" as our French governess used to call our expeditions after fungi ; or to pick wild strawberries in the clearing of the forest. They would come out with us in the broiling heat of the summer at noontide to collect beetles—all those bright winged insects which feast on leaf and flower, or the beautiful stag-beetles which crawl on the trunks of newly felled and barked pine trees all oozing with rosin, exhaling a sweet smell while the atmosphere is vibrating in the heat.

As the train drew in to the station of Levashovo

I caught a glimpse of an old Finnish driver, the last of his kind—one of those who, in days gone by, used to hire out their little hardy horses to us, to be driven as fast as we liked. How we loved to drive out for picnics—drive on these little springless carts deep into the forest over rough tracks. How thoroughly we enjoyed ourselves—in those jolly, happy days of care-free youth!

Pointing to the derelict cart and driver I told my friend how once a relative who did not know where our country house was, had merely said to one of the drivers at the station: "Take me to the kindest lady of this neighbourhood." She was taken straight to our house, but this was not surprising, for had not someone called my mother's home the "Inn of the Golden Heart"—as true a description as ever was given.

An hour and a half later our train slowed down—we had arrived at the Finnish frontier. An officer, accompanied by gendarmes, passed along the train and every passenger handed him either passport or permit, the latter if merely travelling between some Finnish Datcha place and Petrograd.

Convinced that my passport was in perfect order, I handed it to the officer, who carefully opened the ponderous English document, and then suddenly addressed me: "Your passport is not in order."

"In what way?" I asked, utterly taken aback at this unexpected turn of affairs.

"You have no permission from the police in Petrograd to leave Russia."

My fellow passengers listened with unfeigned interest and visible sympathy to this conversation.

"What would you suggest that I should do?" I asked, "for if I do not go on to-day, I lose all the sleeping cars I have ordered in Sweden and Norway."

"Even if I let you pass this frontier," answered the officer, "you would be kept back at Torneo. The best thing for you to do is to return at once to Petrograd."

"Could I not telegraph for a permit?"

"Of course, that you can do," he replied, "but the wire will have to be censored and you will not receive an answer for many hours."

"Then can I telephone to the Premier?"

"No, that is impossible," said the officer, "for since the war began we have no telephonic communication with the Capital."

The humour of the situation appealed to me so keenly that I could not feel angry. There had been no hitch in my whole journey up and down Russia, and here was I turned back, and why? Because one sentence had not been written in my passport. The chief dvornik was the culprit, and the official who had looked at my passport the previous night had evidently not remarked the omission.

"If you cross the station quickly, you can catch a train and you should be able to arrange your affairs to-day," advised the officer, who quite realised where the fault lay—but law is law. There was nothing to be done, and taking an armful of rugs and pillows—my luggage had already been bundled out by the porter the moment the verdict as to my passport had been given—we quickly crossed the station building and jumped into the train for Petrograd.

It was only a two hours' run to the Capital. We drove directly to the English Embassy and, following the advice of one the Secretaries, drove to the Gradonatchalnick of Petrograd. I shewed my passport, and was told that all I had to do was to go to the Police Station nearest to where I had stayed, and the matter would be settled immediately.

As I drove up at my cousin's house, the hall porter stared at us and exclaimed: "What has happened?"

"Why did the dvornik not see to my passport properly?" I asked. "Please go and fetch him at once."

No dvornik, however, was to be found. Taking pity on me, the porter came with me to the Police Station, which, luckily for us, was across the road.

"Oh yes, there is no reason whatever against your leaving," said the officer on duty, and a quarter of an hour later I received my passport duly stamped. One sentence only had been added.

"Why did you not get my passport rightly signed?" I asked the dvornik when that individual had at last turned up.

"You merely said you were leaving, Baryinia; how was I to know that you meant for England?"

At 6 o'clock that same evening we were again at the frontier. The same officer who had turned me back in the morning passed through the carriages to look at the passports. With a feeling of inward triumph I handed him mine—he glanced at it, made a slight bow, and with a smile remarked: "Everything is in order; now will you please step into the office and fill in the necessary papers." While I was writing answers to the various questions as to whence and whither, a

young man was being cross-examined. His answers were rather vague. Evidently something was not quite above-board, for suddenly I heard the officer say with a stern ring in his voice : " We cannot let you cross the frontier."

This was a very different tone from that in which I had been spoken to when my passport did not prove to be in order.

The dvornik's mistake cost me thirty roubles and made me lose my sleepers.

CHAPTER LVII.

A CENTRE OF MERCY.

JUST before coming to Torneo every window in the train was carefully closed and all the carriage doors locked. No passengers were allowed to leave the train before the passports had been taken from them by the gendarmes. I was still in my compartment when suddenly one of the gendarmes came up to me : " Are you Gospoja Gow ? " (Mrs. Howe) he asked.

" Surely it is not again my passport," flashed through my mind as I said, " Yes, I am," to the representative of military law and order.

" His Imperial Highness the Prince of Oldenburg has telegraphed about you, and Count Shouvalov is expecting you."

What could it mean? I followed the gendarme to the Count, who informed me that he had received orders to show me the barracks in which the totally disabled prisoners of war were lodged on their arrival from Germany, *via* Sweden. I was very pleased to have this opportunity of seeing this organisation, and the Count, as the representative of the Prince in this very important though dull place, kindly showed me all there was to be seen. The barracks were wooden buildings—clean and comfortable. In several small rooms I saw mentally afflicted men, who, for this reason, had been sent back to Russia. It was a most pathetic sight to see these wrecks of manhood. I was struck by their looks of hopeless dulness. They gazed at me with stony eyes. Had the horrors of captivity snapped beyond repair the spring of buoyancy and hope?

In the next barracks I found a party of men who had arrived only the previous day. The large, light and airy room was filled with rows of bedsteads. Next to the door two men, propped up with pillows, were reclining on the beds—both with amputated legs.

“Wait till you get some new legs,” said the Count genially, “and you will be able to walk quite well.”

“Not only that,” I added, “but from what I read about the wonders of artificial limbs, you will even be able to run and dance.”

The men looked at us with a happy smile.

“What fine shirts you have on,” I remarked.

“Yes, very different from the rags we were given at the German camp,” the one answered, while the other added: “Nothing was too bad for us to wear.”

With unfeigned pleasure the invalided soldier looked down upon his new red shirt.

On the next bed lay a whole pile of shirts in all colours of the rainbow, and upon the weary invalids, whose existence was gray and monotonous and whose clothing had been drab, these bright shirts of themselves must have had a cheering influence.

"By order of the Prince the invalids are not sent to Petrograd the day they arrive," the Count informed me. "His Imperial Highness wishes them to have a thorough rest and break in their journey. They all get a bath and are dressed in new clothing, and you see how pleased they are."

We walked through several other barracks—all spotlessly clean. I was struck by the general aspect of friendly cheerfulness which pervaded the buildings. Lastly the Count took me into a barrack where the medical and nursing staff were having their dinner. After having been introduced to doctors and nurses, I was invited to share their frugal meal. The Count asked to be excused for the time being, and expressed the hope that I had been pleased with what I had seen.

"Indeed, very much so, and I am going at once to send a telegram to His Imperial Highness to tell him how delighted I am with everything," I said, as I thanked the Count for his kindness and the trouble he had taken.

Concentrated suffering is witnessed in this Centre of Mercy—suffering especially acute because there is no hope of restoration to health. Sympathy, at all events, is shown to these sad-faced soldiers by the devoted staff, and kindly and tender care is taken of them.

It is no sinecure to be on duty in this outpost in the far north on the frontier of a neutral country, where a camp of barracks has sprung up to supply the need. It is a dull place—no great events happen in this out-of-the-way corner—there is merely three times a week the repetition of the same sad scene, the disembarkation or embarkation of totally disabled soldiers. Perhaps the greatest hardship for the staff is to witness suffering they cannot alleviate. Yet, possibly, the friendly welcome and the gift of the brightly coloured shirts may act soothingly on sore and weary hearts.

The matron kindly accompanied me to the railway station, where I had once more to fill in a paper with answers to many questions. Afterwards I sent a telegram to the Prince of Oldenburg, in which I expressed appreciation of his kindness towards me and admiration of the manner in which everything is arranged for the comfort of the mutilated heroes. I realised that everything was being carried out here according to the orders, and in the spirit of the Chief of the "Ministry of Mercy."

I wrote the telegram in the large waiting-room where travellers to and from Russia have to spend many weary hours. At one of the tables, eating his dinner with great relish, sat quite a young lad.

"Who is this boy that so many people speak to him?" I asked the Russian Consul, who had been watching me writing my telegram.

"That boy has just returned from Germany, where he was a prisoner of war," the Consul replied. "This brave little chap joined the Army at the very beginning of the war. He was only twelve years old when he was

taken prisoner. Now, after having kept him in captivity for two years, the Germans have sent him back as of no value to them."

It was time to leave Torneo to cross by ferry boat to Haparanda. At the entrance to the pier were gendarmes and before a small box-office stood a queue of passengers to whom their passports were being returned. I received mine out of turn as the Consul asked for it. It was given me without demur—this time there was no flaw in it.

My last hour on Russian territory (though on Swedish soil) was spent in the Russian Consulate where the indefatigable Consul related to me many interesting things. He enumerated also some of the tasks which had fallen to his share since the war had made Haparanda the crossing place to Russia. Apparently it is due to the energetic action of this official that the train now runs right to the shore and not, as until recently, merely to Karungi, whence passengers had to drive to the ferry.

Amongst the trains which leave Stockholm for the far north is one which the Swedes call the "Russian train." It is the ambulance train fitted out with every care by the Swedish Red Cross, which acts as the generous intermediary for the exchange of wounded prisoners.

There ought to be an atmosphere of hope in this lonely little northern place, for to these afflicted people—to totally disabled soldiers of both belligerents—the homeland has come within reach.

For the Russians, at any rate, it lies just across the narrow strip of water which separates Haparanda from Torneo.

CHAPTER LVIII.

AN UNAVOIDABLE TOPIC OF CONVERSATION.

I MUST admit that at the beginning it amused me to hear the word "sugar" mentioned wherever I went in Russia, but very soon I realised what a deep tragedy it really implied. I heard the topic of sugar discussed in train and tram, in drawing-room and kitchen, in palace and hut, and not a single newspaper did I open without coming across some article on the burning question of sugar. I was told how the sugar kings were keeping the sugar back in order to raise the prices; how the banks were hoarding it up; or again, I was joyfully told that the Head of the town had bought truckfuls of sugar, and soon there would be an end of the sugar famine in Petrograd.

I passed grocers' shops and on door or window I read a notice, "No soft sugar to be had." As to loaf sugar, it is months since any has been sold. I watched many a queue of men, women and children standing on the pavement waiting for certain shops to sell sugar. For hours they stand there, patiently waiting for their turn to come, no one trying to push forward; quietly and in order they stand and wait, perhaps only to be told that all the sugar has been sold out. If lucky, they are able to buy one pound, for even at these specially licensed shops no more than this could be sold at one time. All the more surprising then,

to see some persons carrying heavy parcels of sugar, or to be shown sacksful of the precious stuff in private storerooms, and even to be offered lump sugar, which is not supposed to exist, in some private houses for my tea.

“ Oh ! this can be done,” was a phrase I so often heard an influential man use on the telephone, when asked all sorts of favours. It is herein that the tragedy lies, that “ everything ” can be done by those who know how. With regard to sugar, you must know someone who buys stores for hospitals, etc., and he will let you have sugar, much sugar.

It was the poor for whom I felt—for they live on tea, and in order to relish the clear, weak beverage, they must have sugar. They do not put it into their tea, as is done in other countries, but bite off a wee bit of the lump sugar, keep it in their mouth, and then drink the tea. To them, therefore, soft sugar is of no use whatever. At present they are buying boiled sweets instead, and Marie Antoinette’s suggestion, “ Let the people eat cake, if there is no bread to be had,” is being carried out in Russia, for when unable to get sugar, the poor people buy sweets.

Oh, the pathos of it all ! To see the harassed expression of the small shopkeeper as he remarked to me, “ What are we to do ? There is no sugar. Boiled sweets, even the cheapest, cost 70 to 80 kopeks a pound ” (about rs. 9d.).

I was struck by the look of despair on a peasant’s face as he walked into a chemist’s store in Kiev. “ For Christ’s sake,” he said, “ can you sell me a pound of sugar ? ”

"What has suddenly got into your brain? I don't sell any sugar," replied the astonished chemist.

"Well, I hoped you might do so, for I've been in every shop in Kiev, and cannot get even a pound," and sighing deeply, the old man went out into the street.

That same night I dined with some very rich and influential people. To my surprise someone belonging to a neutral country broke suddenly into the conversation with:

"Is it true what I'm told, that it is so difficult to get sugar in Russia at present?"

I had to laugh when I heard this question. Was I never to have a single meal or to go anywhere without hearing about sugar? I told my hostess that this topic seemed to pursue me everywhere, when, pointing to one of the gentlemen of the party, she remarked:

"May I introduce you to one of our sugar kings."

"So you are one of those miscreants," I remarked, and he laughed amusedly, as he said, "Please don't be too hard on us. It is not our wickedness, but merely the congestion of traffic and the lack of rolling-stock."

Another guest, to whom politics and diplomacy were easier subjects to understand than the sugar market, looked very puzzled, and turning to me, he said, "I wish I could explain the whole matter to you, for I have been told the exact causes for the sugar famine, but they seemed to me exceedingly complicated."

Soon after I read an article in a leading daily, which suggested that the cause of this crisis was the immense

demand made upon the supply for the army. There is a good deal of truth in this, for the fifteen million Russian soldiers consume a far greater amount of sugar per head than if they had remained tillers of the soil. As a matter of fact, the only people who do not complain or grumble about sugar are the military, and an officer, who was returning after many months at the front, remarked to me with surprise, "How is it that everybody seems to be talking about sugar? We have never lacked any at the front."

One day in a railway carriage I heard a lady say to her companion, "Surely you do not mean to say that you have been able to buy sugar? Wherever did you get it from?"

"Oh! quite simple. I heard that in the town of X—— sugar was for sale, so I took train and went there."

It is quite worth while spending a good many roubles on fares and travelling for hours, if thereby one can get sugar. The number of people, however, who are able to get sugar by hook or by crook is very limited, and therefore the beautiful fruit must rot, for both jam and stewed fruit require sugar. Daily the old servant who was waiting on me regaled me with jeremiads on sugar, and I never met a group of people who were not talking about it. Criticism was rife, and all sorts of solutions for the problem were proposed. The most practical remark I heard about this matter was from a tram-conductor.

"The only thing to do is for the people to get hold of the speculators and hang them on lamp-posts."

He merely voiced what all the people feel. Nor are they far wrong, for the speculators are getting rich, and the sooner they are caught the better. "U nas v' Rossii" (With us in Russia)—everybody used this phrase when speaking of this crisis—with a shrug of the shoulders and a hopeless voice of discontent. At last, I really began to think that matters were worse in my beloved country than anywhere else, and I did so until I came to Sweden and Norway. There, however, I heard just the same talk about sugar, either that there was none to be had, or that one could buy only one pound at a time, and that at two or three times the price it cost in Russia.

I returned to England, and one of the first things my servant told me was that sugar could only be bought a pound at a time. I laughed when I heard this, for it seemed that after all Russia was not the only country where sugar is difficult to get.

CHAPTER LIX.

COLD WATER.

A FEW days after my arrival in London I was dining with some Russian friends at my club. They wanted to know my news—I told them, and produced the letter from the Minister of Justice. Instead of the expected joy, I was chilled by the dead silence with

which my news was received. Later, one of them remarked : " One hundred and twenty ! that is a mere drop in the ocean—think of the thousands who are in Siberia ! "

The next day a paragraph appeared in the paper to the effect that the Minister of Justice had seen his way to liberate 120 exiles. Mr. Khvostoff's letter to me was reprinted in several dailies.

A few days later I received the following letter from one of my aforementioned friends :—

" We have wired the news of M. Khvostoff's letter, and the news of the release of the 120 exiles to the *Bourse Gazette*, of Petrograd. I saw Khvostoff's letter in the *Manchester Guardian*. The whole press brought the news, and I hear from a friend who arrived from Paris this morning that the French press have also mentioned the matter of the release with much satisfaction. . . . As to Russian opinion, you must realise, my dear friend, that intellectual Russia has suffered too much from deliberate injustice to get any satisfaction on philanthropic grounds. We are very happy for the 120 individuals, but their release does not change the arbitrary system, and a change—namely, an amnesty for some class of political offence—is the only thing that would really matter." . . . (Just what I had urged upon Makaroff !). " I am telling you all this in order to explain the Russian attitude to Khvostoff's letter ; we do not rely upon bureaucratic promises and diplomatic charity, which helps to save appearances without actually doing away with the evil . . . "

My friend who wrote this letter had evidently not realised that Makaroff had promised to work out that



"NOT EXPECTED"—THE EXILE'S RETURN.

[By N. E. Repine.]



very thing, viz., an amnesty, dealing with exiles according to the paragraphs under which they had been condemned. I was hopefully awaiting the fulfilment of his promises. In consequence of the letter, I wrote to him from London asking him to expedite matters, but Government wheels work slowly ; however, I received the following letter from the secretary of Mr. Stuermer :—

“ The President of the Council of Ministers charges me to inform you that all that it is possible to do concerning the cause you have pleaded, will be done by His Excellency.”

In the Russian section of *The Times* of October 28th, there appeared a note to the effect that the Prime Minister recently made a representation to the Council of Ministers in which he declared that, recognising the impracticable character and inexpediency of the law relating to exile, he would propose to repeal it. The Minister of Justice hesitated to regard as timely the entire repeal of the exile system as such.

Surely this was the moment for the Ministers to bring forward an amnesty by category as promised so faithfully.

A few weeks later another of those frequent changes of Ministers took place—Stuermer fell, and with him Makaroff and Khvostoff. However genuine the intentions of these men may have been—and they should have the benefit of the doubt—their power was gone.

In spite of all these disappointments, I felt most strongly that my journey had not been altogether in vain, for when on my return I reported to the Russian Ambassador all my experiences, and concluded by

quoting Sir George Buchanan's sympathetic and encouraging words, Count Beckendorff assured me that he echoed Sir George's sentiments. The fact that these two highly honoured representatives of the Allied Powers were so pleased with the result of my efforts was to me the best proof that something had, after all, been accomplished, and that, humanly speaking, owing to Count Olsoufieff.

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Owing to the Author's absence from England while the book was passing through the press the following errors have crept in :—

Page 86—*Read* "The Sanctuary Gates of the St. Isaac's Cathedral."

Page 96—*Read* "Interior of the Central Dépôt of the Red Cross in Petrograd."

Page 152—*Read* "Army" instead of "St. George" and "its" instead of "his."

Page 216—*Omit* "Interior."

On list of Contents *read* "at one time British Ambassador," after Sir Arthur Nicholson.

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